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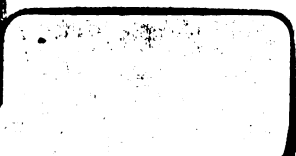
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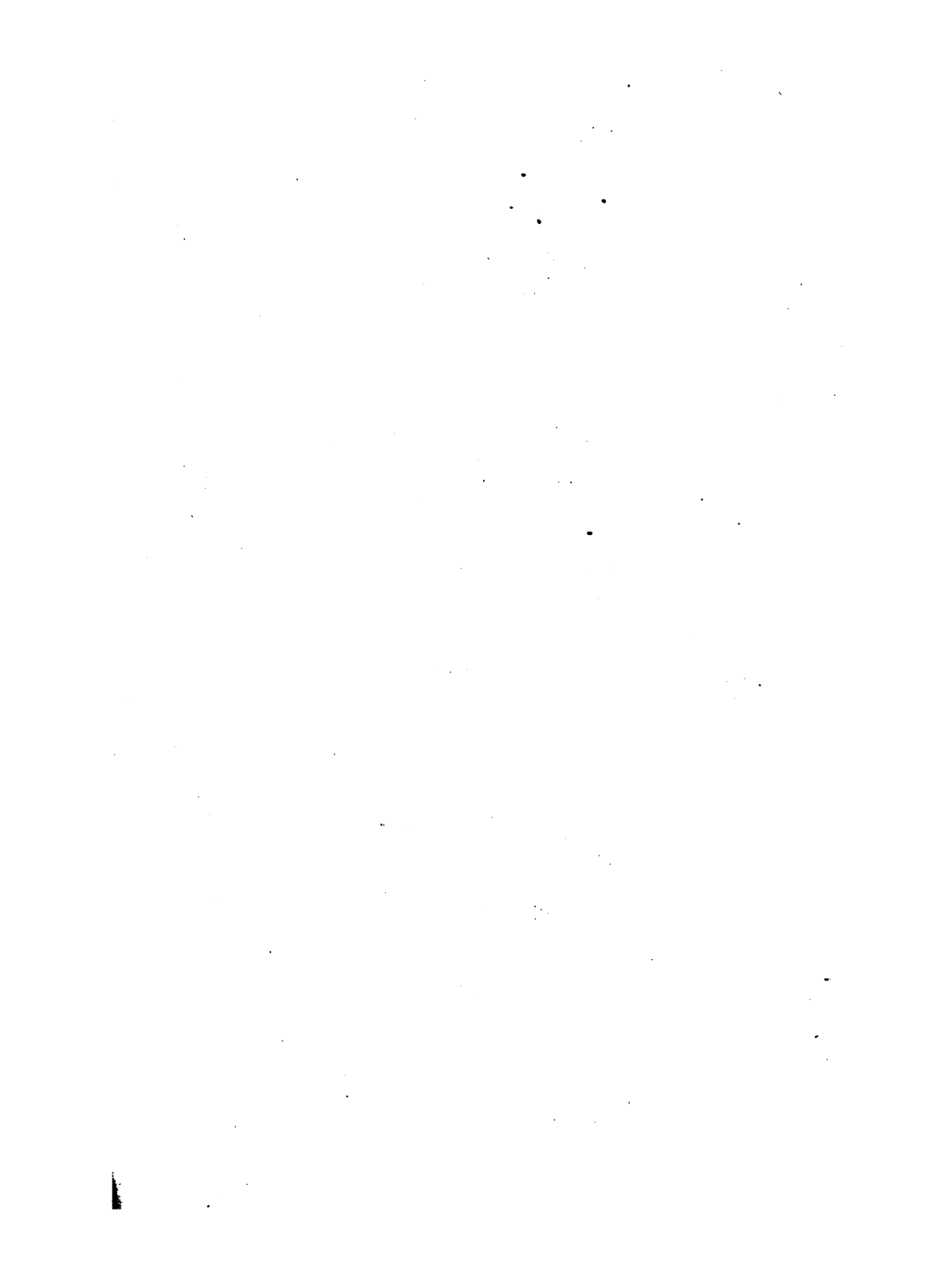


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THE BURDEN OF ISABEL

A Novel



BY

J. MACLAREN COBBAN

AUTHOR OF "THE RED SULTAN" ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS

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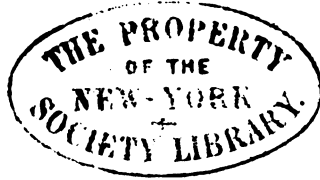
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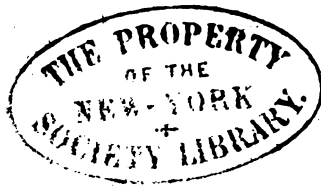
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ANSEL F. JONES AND
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THE BURDEN OF ISABEL

CHAPTER I

THE RETURN OF THE MASTER

To the æsthetically minded southern Lancashire is the most provoking and irritating region within the coasts of Great Britain. It constantly suggests that there might have been unrivalled opportunities for delight in the picturesque and the beautiful had they not been hewn away, trampled on, or covered up by the remorseless genius of modern Lancashire industry. Here, for instance, is a glen which Nature intended to be as romantic as any in the North, with birch-clothed sides, a clear and frolicsome trout-stream, and turf as soft and scented as the mead of Asphodel. Nature's intention, however, has been thwarted, and we have, instead, merely a convenient hollow and convenient water for dye-works: the sky-line is cut by a tall, smoking chimney, the upper end of the glen is blocked by a pile of building and a dirty dam, the birches are stunted and blighted by smoke and the gases of filthy chemicals, the stream is choked by ashes and other refuse, and is shrunk to an ashamed and noisome dribble, and the mead of Asphodel is turned into a broad cinder-track for mill-hands and coal-carts.

This is a common and saddening sight in southern Lancashire. Yet are there others where it is pleasant and cheering to see that under proper and kindly control the genius of modern industry may have room and verge enough without committing outrage of a wanton kind upon dear mother Nature. Not very far from the glen (or clough) already indicated there is another—or, *was*, a few years ago—where Nature had not been outraged, but only tamed a little. There also were chimney-shafts and buildings and a dam; but the chimneys were notably tall, so that smoke and acrid vapors were carried far above the glen, the buildings were half

hid by healthy and stalwart elms and smothered with ivy and flowering creepers, and the dam looked like a natural lake, its wholesome water being inhabited by fish and water-fowl, and by the homely duck and the stately swan, and its banks overgrown with flags and meadow-sweet. There the stream was clear, and frolicked gayly along at its own sweet will, flashing over pebbles and circumventing obstructive bowlders, or boldly dashing over them. There, too, the turf was turf, green and sweet, where children romped of an afternoon, lads and lasses walked of an evening, and fairies even danced o' nights to the amazement of the prick-eared, half-tame rabbits. And the kindly arranger and controller of all this was George Suffield, cotton-spinner and calico-printer, and Member of Parliament.

On a certain night late in May, Mr. Suffield was walking along the brink of the glen on a foot-path that led from the station. He was returning from a sedulous attention to the legislation of the country to enjoy the brief vacation of Whitsuntide in the bosom of his family. It was very late—almost midnight, indeed—but a full moon illumined all the scene with her pale, mystic light—the clough, the park beyond it with the hall towards which its master was making his way, and the village before him with its neat cottages and gardens and its church standing white in the moonlight with its tower and tapering spire. Suffield walked like a man well pleased with himself and his kind, bearing his bulging Gladstone bag, as he did his years, lightly. He was a man of fifty or sixty, but he was what is called “well-preserved”—his hair and beard were grizzled, that is to say, but, while tall and stoutly-built, he was straight and ruddy, and he showed a fine, careless, open front to the world. Whether the influence of the moon or the neighborhood of the fairest of the clough had touched him, he was in a light and vacant mood. He did not whistle as he went “for want of thought,” but he hummed little catches to himself, and quoted to himself random scraps from his random reading. The tower of the church which he had built caught his roving eye, and he quoted—not too correctly—

“—they built up the tower of Jumley-Jee.
They built it up to a goodly height,
At eleven o'clock on a Thursday night.”

“Why Thursday night?” he asked himself, with a low chuckle of enjoyment of the absurdity of the thing. “And why on earth



at eleven o'clock? Ah, well; I suppose it was just meant to make you laugh; and it does."

Thus he walked leisurely along, enjoying the soft night air, enjoying the moonlight, enjoying the fair rich scene spread before him, and enjoying especially the sense that he had become the possessor and controller of all he saw by his own effort. He came of an obscure but sturdy and honest stock. His father had been a farmer and weaver, "back o' th' White Moss," in the easy old days before Lancashire industry had become so enormous, congested, and reckless. His parents had given him a sound body and a shrewd head, a large heart and a small education; and by the help of God, and of a resolute purpose—and, it must be added, of a good wife, whom he adored—he had done the rest himself. Note him well; for he was of a generation that is fast passing away, a generation whose sons seem to lack much of the old Lancashire "grit," and the cheery and intrepid energy that set England in the front of the commerce and the humanity of the world.

As he continued his placid way, suddenly there came from the clough beneath him, and, it seemed to him, from a spot not far off, the squeak of a scared or captured rabbit, and close upon it a soothing and satisfied "Wir-roo!"

"A poacher! The rascal!" exclaimed Suffield to himself.

Without a moment's hesitation he set down his bag and slipped over the brow of the clough. He had but turned a hillock when, in the shade of two or three birches, he saw a creature in white—man or woman, he could not tell which—kneeling on the ground and holding a struggling rabbit by the ears.

"Put that beast down!" cried Suffield.

"Ow!" exclaimed the creature, at once dropping the rabbit, which bounded away and disappeared in a hole.

"And who the dickens are you to come poaching here?" demanded Suffield. "Stand up and show yourself!"

The creature in white stood up and came softly forward into the full moonlight. Suffield was amazed to see the creature resolve itself into a black man, with very bright eyes and white teeth, and wearing a big white turban, a kind of white blouse with an ample red sash, and trousers of some dark material. The black man made a profound obeisance with his black hands crossed upon his white breast.

"Respectable sir," he murmured, in a very soft voice. He said no more, but bowed still lower and slowly shook his head as if to deprecate the white man's anger.

"Where on earth do you come from?" said Suffield. "Art a boggart," he demanded, lapsing into dialect, "or a kind o' demon fro' th' pit?"

"Respectable sir, no," answered the black man. "To speak with regards to your terms I am not a demon, etcetera. I am Daniel—at your kind, respectable services."

"What?" laughed Suffield, with a pleasant reminiscence in his mind of the judge in *Pickwick*. "Daniel Nathaniel, or Nathaniel Daniel?"

"Respectable sir, no," answered Daniel; "I am Daniel Trichinopoly. The same time I must say I am servant, dressing boy, and cook, and have answered to several others' capacity as clerk, store-keeper, etcetera, etcetera, to a gentleman staying at the great hall, namely, the Sahib Raynor."

"Oh, ah!" exclaimed Suffield. "You're Mr. Raynor's black servant; but why couldn't you say that in so many words?"

"Respectable sir," answered Daniel, "I am regret to say that I have said it in so many words as I was able."

"Ah," said Suffield, with a laugh, "I make no doubt you have. Well, Daniel, your master has arrived then; when did he come? To-day?"

"Respectable sir," answered Daniel, still with mellifluous precision, "if care should be taken to be true the Sahib Raynor arrived the day before to-day."

"But you haven't told me, Daniel, how you came to be snaring my rabbits. The rabbits are mine, you know; I am Mr. Suffield."

"Ah, respectable sir, you are indeed the Sahib Suffield? Large and splendid sir, I kiss your hem." And he was about to carry his salutation into effect.

"No, no, man; don't do that," said Suffield, hurriedly; for he had the English shame of homage of that grovelling sort. "Stand up, and tell me why you were snaring my rabbits; *we* call it poaching."

"Poaching!" Daniel accepted the word with a supple bow. "Now I must say I am taking myself a walk in the scenery, and I am thinking nicely of the moon of India; the same time my sharp eye see a little wild beast run, and I say to myself, 'The little wild beast is made to catch and cook; I am intention to catch and cook and curry him for my master, the Sahib Raynor, etcetera.' With regards, large and splendid sir," said Daniel, with another humble obeisance, "I hope I am forgive for my own experience. I am

just come the day before to-day, and I am still not learned in the manners, customs, ways, etcetera."

"But, Daniel," said Suffield, very much interested and amused, "I thought a Hindoo, or a Buddhist—I don't know which you are—was forbidden by his religion to catch and kill any beast."

"Large and splendid sir," said Daniel, in an energy of resentment, "with regard to above, I am not Hindoo, I am not Buddhist; I am Christian, like my master!"

"H'm, ha," said Suffield, struck by the reply; "you have me there. I suppose that is answer enough—that you are Christian—like your master. You've learned your Christian lesson well. And now your going back to my house, I suppose, Daniel? Let us walk on together."

"Large and splendid sir," said Daniel, making another obeisance, with his dingy hands crossed on his white breast, "I will be highly thankful."

"God made man upright," said Suffield to himself, "but he will bow and wriggle."

So they climbed out of the clough, and returned to find Mr. Suffield's bag, which Daniel insisted on carrying. Thus they went on their way through the village, past the works, round the head of the clough, across the stream by a pretty rustic bridge, and into the park properly so called. The park was extensive, and the house—Holdsworth Hall—stood on a gentle eminence about half a mile from the works and the village. Mr. Suffield and his strange companion, therefore, had plenty of time to become acquainted with each other. Suffield was one of those of whom Sir Walter Scott approved, who act, consciously or unconsciously, on the great Roman writer's rule—"nihil humani a me alienum puto"—who are familiar and sympathetic, that is to say, with all sorts and conditions of men, and who think no human creature too humble, too stupid, too ignorant, or too foreign to teach them something. From the dusky Daniel (who, closer at hand and in the fuller light, was seen to be not black, but rather brown or coffee-colored) he learned (what he already knew fairly well) that cotton-spinning and weaving and calico-printing were rapidly becoming great industries about Bombay; moreover, that Daniel himself, when a very young man, had worked in a cotton-mill, and that he had a longing to become better acquainted with cotton manufacture in general, because he believed (had he not evidence at his elbow in support of his belief?) that that way splendor and fortune lay. It

was a memorable conversation; though, like most things memorable, it became so only in the light of subsequent events—events which appertain to this story.

"It's late; you'd better come in this way," said Suffield, when they had reached the great hall-door. "Some of the family up, I see; there's a light in the dining-room."

He knocked and rang a loud peal, and a young gentleman in evening dress, and a sleepy-looking elderly servant in knee-breeches, came to open the door together. They appeared a little surprised to see the strange companion the master of the house had got.

"Oh, Trichy," said the young man, "you're out late."

"Yes, Sahib George," grinned Daniel (he had clearly got into the way already of regarding "Sahib" George as an amusing person), "I appear to be."

"Well, father," said George, grasping the paternal hand, "you've come home at last."

"Yea, lad," said Suffield, "and right glad I am to be out o' that big, roaring London. And how's things?"

"All right, dad."

It was good to see the looks of affection and confidence that passed between father and son.

"And how's Tummas?" called Suffield, after the elderly man-servant, who was retiring in Daniel's company.

"Pretty bobbish, mester," answered Tummas, "as the sayin' is."

"That's all right," said Suffield. Then, in a low voice, he remarked to his son, "He was going away looking rather disappointed. He thought, I suppose, I had forgotten him, poor old Tummas! Is your mother up?"

"No," answered George; "mother has gone to bed."

"And Uncle Harry?"

"He has gone to bed, too," said George. "The rest of us have been to the theatre."

"Oh, it's father!" cried a charming young lady, jumping up and running to Suffield the moment he showed himself in the dining-room.

"Yea, my lass," said he, taking her in his arms—she was small and slight, though shapely—"it *is* feyther. And here's Cousin Isabel, too."

A tall, dark, and strikingly handsome young lady, who had stood waiting with a smile for her turn to be saluted, now came forward.

"I'm here again, you see, uncle," said she, when she had kissed him.

"You can't come too often, my lass," said Suffield. "The only mistake you make, as I've told you before, is not to stay here altogether."

"It's kind of you to say that, uncle, even though you have said it before. But you know I'm an old maid—"

"An old maid!" exclaimed Suffield's daughter, clasping her round the waist. "Hear her, father! Hear her, George! An old maid at four-and-twenty!"

"Still, my dear," said Cousin Isabel, "like the old gentleman in the play, I protest in the face of Europe that, in essence if not in actual fact, I *am* an old maid. I have my own queer, solitary ways that I should not like to give up."

"Well," said Suffield, "you must be fonder o' other people's brats than I should be, Isabel, to spend all your days teaching one lot after another—one down, t'other come on."

"Don't you speak of teaching, uncle," laughed Isabel, "rather as if it were fighting?"

"I know I'd rather do the fighting, myself. Have you had supper? I think I'll just have a mouthful."

He sat down to eat and drink, and the others sat about him.

"Well," said Suffield, "tell me what you saw at the theatre. Was it in the play to-night, Isabel, that the old gentleman protested in the face of Europe? I like that saying, 'protested in the face of Europe.' I dare say, when he was standing in his own back kitchen."

"Something like that, uncle," answered Isabel. "But it was not in the play to-night; it's in a French play."

"Oh, ah," said her uncle; "a French play; Frenchies say that kind o' thing. What was the play, then, to-night?"

George answered his father in some detail. It was notable that he had not spoken till then, that while Cousin Isabel had been excusing herself he had appeared uneasy, not to say impatient and hurt, and that he had cast on her several appealing looks of which she had remained either unconscious or regardless. About the quality of the play and the players the young people did not agree. Both play and players were London successes—a fact which seemed to subdue what critical judgment the easy and good-natured George possessed. Like most of the younger generation, he believed in all things metropolitan; he had his coats, his hats,

and his boots made in London; his favorite reading was the London papers, and he was constantly "running up to town." His sister Euphemia did not even affect to be critical; she bubbled over with direct, unthinking enthusiasm, and thought everything she had seen—especially the dresses—"quite too lovely." Cousin Isabel, on the other hand, was not only critical, but (it seemed to the others) irreverent and revolutionary. She not only called the play a vulgar travesty of a noble story, but laughed at the silly sentimentalism and the mean and jerky elocution with which the parts had been rendered; moreover, she declared that, if such things continued to be generally admired and praised, the theatre would be as little worth going to as a "penny reading." These opinions unutterably disturbed the three Suffields, whose only doubt hitherto had been that the theatre was not morally beyond reproach. And yet they could not ignore or despise what she said; for, apart from the fact that all three were fond of her, they all believed in her cleverness and her judgment, and in her prescriptive right to be severely critical of all things; was she not (though of their family) a teacher in a celebrated ladies' college in London, and by that token a kind of animate encyclopædia of knowledge?

"Ah, well," said the benign Suffield, summing up and closing the discussion, "you're beyond me, Isabel. You strike a high note that I can't reach—a very high note indeed. But, tell me, did any of you see Ainsworth there?"

"Of course," answered the brother and sister together, "he was there for the paper."

"That's all right," said their father. "He'll settle it for us. We'll see what he says about it in the morning's paper."

"He won't go against the verdict of London," said George.

"Oh, won't he?" said his father. "Perhaps he won't, and perhaps he will; but it won't depend on what he cares for what they say or what they think in London. I doubt very much if there's any writer on the London papers cleverer than himself, or as clever. He has a fine head on him, has Alan; he's half Scots and half Lancashire, and he'll go far. You remember Ainsworth—don't you, Isabel? He's dramatic critic and all the rest of it for the *Gazette*."

"Oh yes," said Isabel. "I remember Mr. Ainsworth."

"Well, now," said her uncle, looking at his watch, "it's time we all went to bed."

When the girls withdrew he and George went round to see that all doors and shutters were secured, and then, ascending to their rooms, they said "good-night" at the top of the stairs. But on his way to his own room Suffield observed that the door of the great spare-room stood open, where, he imagined, uncle Harry, the "Sahib" Raynor, was put up. He looked into the room, and discovered that the bed, though tumbled, was empty. In perplexity and alarm he called his son softly.

"This is Uncle Harry's room, isn't it?" he asked.

George answered that it was, and he, too, looked in to make sure that Uncle Harry was not playing them a prank; but neither in bed nor under it, nor in wardrobe or cupboard, could Uncle Harry be found.

"What the dickens can have become of him?" said Suffield. "Perhaps your mother will know."

He entered his wife's room, and soon returned, relieved and chuckling.

"What do you think?" he said to his son. "Your mother tells me he's camping out! He has been so many years used to sleeping out o' doors that he can't be comfortable in a proper bed and a proper bedroom, and he begged your mother to let him take a blanket out into the park! He's a caution, but I'll find him i' th' morning."

CHAPTER II

UNCLE HARRY

VERY early next morning Mr. Suffield himself opened his hall-door and inhaled the fresh morning air with a loud and satisfied "Ah!" He left the hall-door open—to have all things belonging to him open was characteristic of the excellent man—and sauntered away through the park, with his hands in his pockets, whistling softly to himself, and cocking now and then a half-observant eye on the trees and the rooks, that cocked wholly observant eyes on him and cawed, but sat still, as if they also knew all about his openness and hospitality. He sauntered on, and still on, steadily, as if he had a fixed end in view, though he rambled a good deal from a straight line.

"Now where the dickens has he put himself up?" he said aloud.

He looked all around, surveying bit by bit every hollow and every clump of trees in his purview. At length something caught his eye a tolerable way off.

"Ah," said he, cheerfully (regardless of grammar), "that must be him."

He quickened his pace, and made directly for the object he had descried. As he neared it, he could make it out to be a kind of small tent pitched under a great beech.

"Hah!" he exclaimed to himself. "That's how he does it."

When he got quite near he tramped round to examine the disposition of the erection, grunting good-naturedly as he remarked each point, "Hum! Ha, ha!" He had noted that the ridge-pole of the tent was an almost bare arm of the beech, which stuck out at right angles at about the height of a man; that the tent itself was a piece of sail-cloth, stretched over the bare bough and pegged to the ground at the interval of a yard or so, and that one end was closed by a triangular flap of cloth, while the other was open, and had evidently had a small fire of dried twigs burning against it; he had noted these things when he perceived that a corner of the flap was gently raised, showing a face and the shining barrel of a rifle.

"Holloa, Harry!" cried Suffield, with a laugh. "Hold hard, and save your powder!"

There then came, from the tent a chuckle of laughter, followed by a little, wiry-looking man in a complete suit of flannels. A rather remarkable and authoritative little man he seemed, with a dense head of hair, and beard close-clipped, and gray and stiff as a badger's, and clear, gray eyes, keen as a needle. He said not a word, but yawned and stretched his arms.

"Going to have a pot-shot at me, were you?" said Suffield.

"I think," said the little man, "I was dreaming I was in the jungles I've come from, and the tramping of your feet and your grunting—you *were* grunting, you know—made me think of an elephant, or some other wild creature."

"That's all right, Harry. It's just the kind o' thing you'd ha' said five-and-twenty years ago. But what sort of sleep have you had?"

"Capital! The sleep, George, of the natural man—constant, light, and refreshing."

"Well, Harry," said Suffield, "I'd a deal rather you than me. I'm unnatural man enough to prefer a bed and a four-poster in a good big room, with no draughts about. Of course this sort of thing, the green grass, the open air, 'Hail, smiling morn!' and all that, I dare say, suits you—it may suit you in fine weather, at least; but I'd have thought you'd had so much of it in your time, lad, that you'd appreciate the comfort of a regular bed in a proper bedroom. Howsoever, there you are, and here I am, and of course you're free to do as you like. I only heard late last night that you had taken up your traps and camped out. I didn't get home till very late, and the wife was in bed; but she told me that you had found your bed too soft—"

"Abominably soft," said the other; "I wallowed in softness."

"I dare say you did, lad; our beds are all the finest feather-beds, stuffed by the hands of my own blessed mother; and she didn't spare the feathers, I can tell you. Yes, the wife said you had found the bed soft and the room stuffy, even wi' the windows wide open, and so you had just taken up your bed and walked."

He paused in his talk to observe his brother-in-law, who had struck his tent and was rolling it up.

"Ah," said Suffield, "you're pretty comfortable, after all—a blanket, a carpet, and a pillow. But what about catching rheumatism, my lad?"

"Underneath my carpet, you see"—he showed him—"is a mackintosh sheet."

"Ah," said the interested Suffield, taking up and handling the pillow, "a kind o' India-rubber bladder—eh? Good idea that, my lad; keeps your head cool."

"Which you will perhaps say, George, is not unnecessary."

"Nay, nay, lad," said George, "that's understood; no need to say it."

"I'm proud of this pillow, though," said the other, with a laugh. "It not only keeps my brain cool, but it keeps my mouth cool, too. It's just a pillow now, but it can be a water-bottle on occasion, and many a time it has served me as that."

"That's economical, lad, certainly," said Suffield. "And have you a double use for all your traps?"

"For most of them," answered the other. "This little Persian carpet, now, I use also as a saddle-cloth."

"Ah," said Suffield, "but your little tent—what about it?"

"There, now," said Harry, "what other use do you think I put it to?"

"Can't guess," said Suffield; "unless you make your bearers or servants carry it over you like a canopy."

"I make a sail of it," said the other, with a nod of pride. "You know I carry with me on my journeys a boat in sections; well, there I have a sail ready to rig up when I can."

"'Pon my word, Harry," said Suffield, "you're just the same ingenious young rascal as used to fry bacon and boil potatoes and make toffee in the same saucepan at school!"

"And, 'pon my word, George," exclaimed Harry, "you're just the same fat, talkative old rascal as used to sit by and criticise my cooking, and then help to eat it!"

At that they both laughed, while the tent-dweller finished packing away his traps.

"I suppose," said he, "I can leave them here?"

"Oh, to be sure," said Suffield. "There's to be a treat in the park to-day for my people and the childer; but that don't matter; they'll interfere wi' nought. Set them again' the tree, lad—except your blanket; perhaps we'd best carry that in, in case it should rain."

They sauntered away back towards the house together, Suffield taking his old school-fellow's arm, and insisting on carrying his blanket.

"And how," asked the old school-fellow, "do you get on with your work-people in these days of strikes and of Jack in general being as good as his master?"

"I've no trouble," answered Suffield. "I treat my people well, and they treat me well. I reckon them more than mere machines to keep my works going, and they reckon me a good master."

"Ah," said the other, "you want to rule with sugar-sticks."

"I don't want to rule at all, my lad," said Suffield; "but if I must rule I'd rather do it wi' sugar-sticks than wi' cat-o'-nine-tails."

"Ah, it won't do, George."

"Well, Harry," said Suffield, "we won't discuss it; our point o' view 's different. You've been used to black fellows; I've been used to Englishmen. By-the-way, I came across your black servant last night. There's a deal of human nature in him for a black man. He had caught a rabbit which, he said, he meant to curry for you."

"I dare say. He *can* curry."

"I rather like him—an amusing creature."

"Oh," said Harry, "he can curry favor, too."

"Harry, my lad," said Suffield, "that's an old trick of yours—punning. You stick to your old habits."

"About the only things old that I do stick to—except old friends, George."

"That's as it should be, Harry. But come now; tell me about yourself. Have you done pretty well out there—what wi' ruby mines and white elephants and all that sort o' game?"

"Oh yes, pretty well," answered the other, shooting a keen glance at Suffield's face. The glance could not fail to assure him that there was nothing in the inquiry but kindly interest, and he repeated, less sharply than before, "Yes; oh yes, pretty well."

"And you're come home now to settle down—I can't say in your own house—but in your own tent, I hope?"

"Perhaps, perhaps. I can't say yet."

"Ah, now, Harry, I want to talk to you," continued Suffield, "about Isabel Raynor, your niece—and my niece, of course, too—your poor brother John's daughter. You've seen her, of course?"

"Oh yes, I've seen her."

"And a handsome, clever girl she is," said Suffield.

"Is she?" said Uncle Harry, as if he were little interested in the matter.

"Is she?" echoed Suffield. "Why, lad, don't you know a handsome woman when you see her, and a clever woman when you talk to her?"

"I'm no judge of women, George. They're not in my line."

"I see what you would be at, Harry," said Suffield, seriously, after a meditative pause; "but I had no idea you could keep that feeling up so long. 'Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath,' my lad; but many and many a sun have you let go down. It's not right, Harry; it's wicked, lad, and you'll rue it yet. Howsoever, you'll come right in the end, I reckon. I believe your heart's in th' right place, and you'll like the girl if you give yourself the chance."

"I noticed," said Uncle Harry, "that your son seems to have given himself a good chance in that way; he appears to like his cousin rather more than mere cousinship demands."

"Yea," said Suffield, simply; "George thinks a deal of Isabel, and is, I believe, fond of her. A man's best fortune, or his worst, is his wife. I have no doubt which Isabel would be, and I'd like George to have her. But somehow they don't seem to hit it off; she doesn't cotton to him."

"'Cotton,' George, is a good word to use in the connection."

"I know what you mean, Harry," said Suffield. "But this is not a time for joking. I tell you I think about Isabel a great deal. I don't like to know she's working hard at school-keeping, and living in lonely lodgings in London when we've more than we know what to do with. It's not good for a woman any more than for a man to live alone. I've begged her till my mouth was dry wi' begging to come and stay with us; but no, she won't, thank me all the same. Now if she'd only take on wi' George—"

"'Cotton,'" corrected Uncle Harry, with a mischievous smile.

"—and set up house wi' him," continued the excellent Suffield, as if he had not heard the interruption, "I should be happy about her."

"Well, George," said Uncle Harry, "she ought to do a good deal for you: you've done a great deal for her—though I am prepared to admit that gratitude for kindness is the last return a man should expect."

"Gratitude, my lad! I get more of it than I can do with from folk. But gratitude I neither require nor need from Isabel. I've done no more for her than I've done for th' rabbits in th' clough yonder. I've given them the chance of fending for themselves

without going in terror of their lives; and that's all I ever did for Isabel. If she'd take to George—and he's not a bad lad at all—I'd take it, not as gratitude, but as a favor, as a kind of condescension on her part; for she's handsome and clever, as I said before, and as good a girl as can be."

"But," asked Uncle Harry, "would your wife, my admirable sister, be satisfied? Hasn't she a greater ambition for her son than that?"

"Oh, you've noticed that already, have you? Yes, Joanna is chock-full of ambitions for all of us—for me, too, bless her!"

"Well, after all," said the uncle, "I don't myself approve of cousins marrying."

"Not if they're both perfectly healthy? Howsoever, Harry, that just brings me to my point: since it don't seem likely that Isabel will take to George, don't you think you might—well, do your duty by her?"

"And what, George," asked the uncle, quietly, "does a good man like you think my duty?"

"Well, it's hard to say; but forget what's past, my lad. Do something for the girl: ask her to keep house for you, or summat?"

"I don't intend at present, George, to set up house, even if you turn me out."

"Turn you out! You've turned yourself out, and taken the key of the park."

"Well, then, my dear George," said Uncle Harry, stopping and laying his hand on his brother-in-law's arm, "we'll not discuss it any more at present. You're a good man, George; but give me a little time to find where I am. Now I'm going to have a dip in your stream. The water is pure enough, I suppose?"

"Pure enough to-day to drink, if you like."

"By-the-way," said Uncle Harry, "why are the mills not started yet? It's past six a long while."

"Mills started! You forget it's Whitsuntide. We're idle for a week."

They were now on the brink of the glen, which was separated from the park by a low oak paling with a convenient stile at the point where they had arrived. While Uncle Harry descended into the glen for his morning dip, Mr. Suffield sat on the stile and meditated. His meditation took the form of reminiscence of his own and Harry Raynor's youth—a memorial excursion on which

the few words they had exchanged about Isabel had set him off. "Poor old Harry!" he murmured, glancing after his brother-in-law. He gradually raised his eyes and let his mental vision travel over the glen and the clean and cosey village he had built; over the sombre hills beyond, which divided from the great county of Yorkshire, and across which now poured the morning sunlight, warm and golden, away still on over moor and dale, town and river, till the sea was reached. He recalled a certain holiday time in his exuberant and energetic youth when he casually met on the glistening sands between the cliffs and the gentle summer sea his two old school-fellows, John and Harry Raynor, accompanied by their sister Joanna (tall and handsome, as Isabel now was), and by Joanna's school-friend, Mary Weatherly. How he remembered, as though it were yesterday, that his heart leaped when he set eyes on Joanna, and he exclaimed, confidently to himself, "That's the girl that I shall marry!" He walked on with Joanna, on and on over the shining sands, and let the brothers Raynor have Mary Weatherly between them. Mary's position that day was symptomatic, and suggestive of what was to follow: she was divided between the two brothers; she liked both, but she had to choose one, and she first chose Harry. But even then John (as he was in honor bound to do) did not cease to think of her. He still plied her with his attentions and importunities, and being in some ways—in manners and speech, especially—more attractive than Harry, he weaned the girl's perplexed affections from his brother. The sad and dishonorable end came when Harry was away accomplishing with Herculean energy a task that was to expedite the time of his marriage; that was the season chosen by John to overcome the last scruples of his brother's affianced wife. He married her in haste and secrecy, and carried her off to London, where the pair had occasion to repent at leisure. Harry was wounded to the quick, and his life was diverted into a new channel. He went away to do business in India, whence his restlessness and recklessness had driven him to be a traveller of the old kind—explorer and merchant, that is, in one—in the little-known and dangerous states that lie between India and China. He had entered Tibet, when it was thought that death only would be the portion of any stranger who showed his face in that exclusive table-land; and he had almost penetrated the secret of the Lamas and knew more about Esoteric Buddhism, and its Mahatmas and Chelas than any other European. He had escaped from the hands

and guards of a ruthless Khan of Chinese Tartary, and had crossed without mishap from Calcutta to Tonkin when Upper Burmah and the Shan states were scarcely adventured upon. He had spent five-and-twenty years in that dangerous and unusual kind of life—years during which his brother John had disappeared from knowledge in the seething abyss of London (his wife having died, and his daughter being surrendered to the care of his sister, Mrs. Suffield)—years during which Suffield had become a wealthy manufacturer. Harry Raynor, too, had won wealth—wealth and fame—and now he had returned to his own people to end his days, if so be that his restless soul would permit him to be so much like other men.

So many things had happened to George Suffield since he had married Joanna Raynor—the years had been so filled with business and pleasure, with duties and cares, private and public—that he was amazed and perplexed to discover that Uncle Harry had not forgotten the loss of twenty-five years ago, that his wound was not yet healed, or that, if it were healed, it was only covered with
X a cicatrice which throbbed painfully to the slightest touch. He did not consider that probably Uncle Harry's years of travel and adventure were but a long parenthesis of merely bodily and mental experience, and that now when he had returned to his native land he had resumed the feeling of his life where he had dropped it.

Uncle Harry soon returned, fresh and rosy, from his dip in the cold stream, and Suffield, inwardly ejaculating, "Poor old Harry!" took his arm, and was marched briskly towards the house. In the garden they saw the tall, dark, and stately Isabel walking lovingly with the small, fair, and clinging Euphemia.

"I can't think," said Suffield, considering his daughter from afar, "who my girl takes after; I'm big, and so's her mother."

"Perhaps," said Uncle Harry, "she takes after her great-grandmother."

Suffield looked at him and laughed, regarding the suggestion as a joke, and said, "On which side?"

"I don't know," said Uncle Harry, seriously; for he had made a study of the small matter of heredity. "But you often find curious instances of atavism, or harking back to remote ancestors."

"You may hark back a long while," said Suffield, "before they'll speak."

"You don't seem to understand, George," said Uncle Harry. "I mean this kind of thing: I, for instance, am very like, I believe,

in appearance and disposition, to my great-grandfather, who was as great a rover by sea as I have been by land. As for you, George, I believe you are like nobody but yourself; you are unique; you are, in your own way, the kind of man, like Shakespeare or Milton, that's born once in a thousand years for the admiration and delight of the world."

"That's a high kind of pedestal you'd like me to mount, Harry," said Suffield, "but I'm not such a fool. Seems to me you want some solid food in you to keep you from flights of fancy. I must hurry breakfast up when we get in."

Tummas answered his summons at the hall-door, and a matron of imperial presence met him on his entrance. She had the front of Juno, an eye kindly but shrewd, and a nose and chin that denoted such firmness of character as might have been suspected to be obstinacy had the suspicion not been subdued by the soft curves of the mouth. This was Mrs. Suffield.

"Goodness gracious, George!" she exclaimed when she saw him. "Look at your feet! Why didn't you put on your goloshes?"

"Oh, ah; yes," he said, looking down at his boots; "they are a little damp, Joan; but I'll take no harm."

"Damp!" exclaimed his wife. "They're sopping wet! You must take them off at once!"

"Well, now," said Suffield, laughing, "look at Harry's boots. Hadn't he better take his off, too?"

"Oh, Harry," said Harry's sister, presenting her cheek to be kissed, "may do as he likes. A man that would rather sleep on the damp, cold ground than in a dry, warm bed must take the responsibility of his own feet and of his own health in general."

"There's for you, Harry!" exclaimed Suffield with a laugh of something like enjoyment. "That's how I'm always ordered and disposed of! You'd better come and change your things."

"Don't be long," said Mrs. Suffield. "We are going to have breakfast early; we have a busy day before us."

CHAPTER III

THE BLACK TULIP AND THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

MEANWHILE Isabel Raynor and her cousin Euphemia Suffield wandered in the sunny garden. If they were not "in maiden meditation fancy free," as they walked along the gravelled paths with their arms about each other, they at least appeared to be. The flowers were late that year, and Whitsuntide was early. There was not a hint of rose-buds, but the garden was gay with the last of the blooms of spring, especially with beds of tulips, for which Suffield had the love of a Dutchman. Fragrant and beautiful, however, as were the flowers in the freshness of the morning, they seemed but sweet and illustrative notes and comments on the beauty of the two maidens that walked among them. A fanciful young poet who afterwards saw the young ladies together in other scenes called them the Black Tulip and the Lily of the Valley. Had he seen them together on that particular morning his floreat fancy would have appeared less forced; for, with the prodigal suggestions of the garden about them, Isabel, in her dark dress and with her rich, dark beauty, seemed indeed the human embodiment, express and admirable, of the Black Tulip of Dumas's unfortunate and long-suffering hero—tall and straight, with a full gorgeous cup—while the fair Euphemia, small and sylph-like, and arrayed in white, looked by contrast with her as the complete realization of the shy and tender Lily of the Valley blooming in its sheath of green.

The Black Tulip and the Lily of the Valley were in close personal contact, but their meditations, to judge from their aspect, were wide apart. Isabel, moderating her naturally stately gait to Euphemia's convenience, passed along with a serious, not to say sad, countenance; for she felt that her Uncle Harry, to whose coming she had looked forward with so lively an interest, if he did not absolutely dislike her, held his liking in abeyance, as if she were primarily under suspicion, and that she both resented and failed to understand. Her cousin, on the contrary, stepped

as to a measure, and let her bright eyes rove carelessly round, now and again whistling excellent imitations of the episodic and sleepy notes of the garden birds, drowsy after their early debauch of song.

"Oh, I do love to be up early in the summer-time!" exclaimed Euphemia, in her happy carelessness failing to remark her cousin's serious abstraction. "Don't *you*, Isabel?—don't *you*?"

"I do, my dear," answered Isabel, smiling on her. "I like to be up early all the year round. It's so pleasant, as Sir Walter Scott used to say, to break the neck of the day's work before breakfast."

"How do you know Sir Walter Scott used to say that?" asked Euphemia, with a touch of childlike pique and wonder on her face.

"How do I know? I've read it, of course, my dear," said Isabel, with a look of wonder in her turn.

"What a lot of things you seem to read, Isabel! You always make me feel like a goose; when you're not here, I rather fancy myself as a clever sort of person."

"My dear Phemy," exclaimed Isabel, "it's not right of me to make you feel like a goose, because you are not a goose at all, but a very bright, dear, clever little song-bird!"

"Oh, it's nice of you to say that, Bel!" said Phemy, hugging her cousin's arm. "I like it, you know—though I don't believe it's true."

"It is true, indeed, my dear," said Isabel, "and I shall blame myself very much if anything I say should somehow make you think poorly of yourself. Forgive me, dear. It is only my school-mistress way, which I am afraid I can't very easily get out of, to quote books I've read and to name authors I happen to be interested in. I'll try not to do it, my dear."

"I wish you were not a school-mistress, Bel."

"What would you have me be—a mill-girl, or a milliner, or a telegraphist?"

"Bel, you know well enough it is not necessary that you should be anything but a lady."

"Merely to be a lady, dear," said Isabel, "is not an occupation by which you can make a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and to be a schoolmistress is."

"You know what I mean, Bel," said Euphemia. "Father always says he has more for us all than he knows what to do with."

Why don't you come and stay with us altogether? I dare say father would give you a hundred and fifty a year for yourself."

"My dear Phemy, I know Uncle George is the best and kindest and most generous man in the world. He is too good, but—well, the fact is, I can't endure to be idle, and I like to earn my hundred and fifty for myself, in my own way."

"I can't understand," said Phemy, "why you want to be so independent. It's not like a girl at all," she added, while she blankly felt and vaguely resented that Isabel was stronger, cleverer, more resolute than a woman had any right to be. It was absurd (and in a sense improper) in a woman to strive to provide herself with those things which fathers (and husbands) were expressly created to find for her. "I suppose, then, Bel, you wouldn't marry a man with money unless you had money too?"

"I should prefer to have some money of my own," answered Isabel, as if she were delivering an opinion which she had seriously pondered; "but I think that 'in that connection,' as the Americans say, it would not matter much if I had money or my husband had money, or we both had nothing but hands and heads to provide a living. Marriage, you see, is like no other relationship; it is—or it should be, I think—not the joining of two persons together, but the bringing together of the two parts of one complete person."

"Like a hook and eye, I suppose," said Euphemia.

"If you like to put it so, my dear," answered Isabel; and then she continued the serious exposition of her view of marriage. "So, you see, what the one has belongs to both, and what the one wants the other makes up. There can be no question of mine or thine, of different interests, if they are properly matched—that is, I suppose," she added, half-musingly, "if they truly and unreservedly love each other."

"What a queer girl you are, Isabel!" exclaimed Euphemia.

"Am I? Perhaps I am," said Isabel, with resignation.

"How you can think of all these awfully wise things I can't make out!"

"I can't help thinking of 'things,' as you call them, when I'm alone."

"Well," said Euphemia, returning in triumph to the point of conviction she had at first wished to make, "that's what I tell you; you've no business to be alone. Father always says it's an absurd shame that a clever, handsome girl like you should not get

married. Tell me now, Bel dear, just between our two selves, why you won't accept George?"

"Really, Phemy dear, that is a plain question!"

"Don't you think him nice? Don't you like him?" urged Phemy.

"I like him very much, but—"

"Do you like any one else better?" pursued Phemy.

"That's not the question, my dear," said Isabel, evading the point with a slight laugh. "To think," she exclaimed, with another laugh, "that all my serious lecture about marriage has been thrown away! Don't you understand, my dear, that in my view a girl must not only like a man, but understand and admire him, and sympathize with his ambitions very much, to be ready to spend all her life with him? I couldn't marry George—though it's impertinent to say that, since he has never asked me; but I couldn't marry him, because I don't think I could spend all my life with him."

"But," said Phemy, "don't you think you could have an affection for a man you didn't admire in those other ways?"

"Oh, affection!" said Isabel. "That's another thing. But I think I give all my affection to my family—to uncle and aunt, and you and George. You may have an affection for a person you wouldn't care to marry."

"George hasn't asked you yet, Bel," said Euphemia, with a clear intention in her tone; "but depend upon it he will ask you."

"You don't mean you will tell him?" exclaimed Isabel, in a hot flush of maidenly alarm. "If you tell him, Phemy, what I have said to you in confidence, I will never forgive you!"

"I won't say anything to him about it, my dear," said Phemy. "Don't be so afraid. But do tell me one thing more—what kind of man do you think you could love very, very much?"

Isabel, however, evidently thought she had said enough in confidence, for she answered lightly, "I don't think I could ever love a man that was not at least twenty years older than myself; I couldn't respect a younger man."

"Now you're not serious," said Euphemia, with a pout; "and I won't tell you the kind of man I could love very, very much."

"Oh, do tell me that, please, Phemy dear," said Isabel, relieved and gratified that confidence was now to be diverted to the other side.

"Well," said Euphemia, hugging still closer her cousin's arm,

"the man I would love very much must be like my dear father. He may be as old as he likes—"

"What!" said Isabel, "seventy or eighty?"

"No; not quite so old as that. I think thirty will do. He needn't be very good-looking—I don't think I care for good-looking men; they're so much taken up with themselves, and their hair and their mustaches—but he must be very good, very kind, and very generous. But there's the breakfast-bell; we mustn't keep mother waiting. I'll tell you some other time."

CHAPTER IV

THE TAME PHILOSOPHER

WHEN they entered the breakfast-room the household was already assembled for morning prayers, and the master of the house sat in his place at the table with the prayer-book before him, and the unopened letter-bag, and the uncut morning papers ready to his hand. Isabel and her cousin dropped silently into vacant seats by the door, and the function went on, Isabel, it must be confessed, feeling and showing considerable preoccupation; she was familiar with that kind of thing twice a day at school. The prayers were decorously and feelingly read, while Tummas, who was a privileged client of the house, and who had been brought up in the Methodist communion, interjected at every pause of the master a fervent "Amen!" and then the man-servants and maid-servants trooped out with cheerful countenance to the day's duties and relaxations. Then also Mr. Suffield turned with alacrity to the letter-bag, to which he and his wife alone possessed a key. He opened it while the family took their places at table, and Tummas brought in the hot dishes.

"Here's two for you, mother," said Suffield, dealing out the letters; "three for you, George, and one o' them in a lady's hand—that won't do, lad; three, four, five, six—bless me!—seven, eight for 'H. Raynor, Esq., C.M.E.!' That must be you, Harry; and most o' them directed and redirected. Ah, Isabel, my lass, and here's one solitary epistle for you. H'm! seems to me I ought to know the fist. Redirected twice over. Well, there you are."

Isabel took her letter, and opened it with misgiving. The first words she read blanched her face to a deathly shade, and almost made her faint with grief, pain, and apprehension. But no one noticed her emotion (except George, who always kept an interested eye on her) because of the entrance of a guest, and Isabel devoured part of her letter unquestioned.

Mr. Suffield kept open house, and a lavish table without ostentation; for it is altogether a mistake to suppose that only those

who have inherited landed estates and personalty running to five or six figures have the art of frank and free hospitality. That is really not an art at all, but an instinct, humane and hearty; and the coster-monger may in his degree possess it as much as, if not more than, the duke. Mr. Suffield's nature was lordly, if not ducal; and the amount he disbursed in casual largesse, as well as in regular beneficence and undemonstrative hospitality, would have impoverished many a man of considerable means. Many and various were the "friends" who dropped in at meal-times when the master was known to be at home, but of all none was more constant in his friendly habit than the present visitor, Mr. Ebenezer McFie. He seldom came when Mr. Suffield was away (for he seemed to know he was not greatly admired or beloved by the mistress of the house); but when Suffield was at home he came regularly to breakfast. He was a dry and somewhat toothless little Scotsman, who had failed as school-master and as editor, and who now lived (it was suspected, but scarcely known) on certain meagre earnings as a teacher and preacher, and on occasional "loans" (or, more properly, gifts) from his generous friend Suffield. He was not a very estimable person, but Suffield delighted in him—in his learning and his eloquence. Mrs. Suffield unkindly called him "George's tame philosopher," and not infrequently hinted that the sole reason of her husband's belief in the tame philosopher's wisdom was that he was the only one besides himself whom he had ever heard talk; her inveterate opinion being that her husband monopolized usually the conversation of the house. The philosopher's style of speech seemed to be modelled on the writings of the late Thomas Carlyle; it was English (of a heavy and involved kind), but it was uttered with so abominable an accent that it was unintelligible to most people. Mr. Suffield had given attention to it and therefore seemed to understand it; but his son, who had not patience to quarry a meaning out of the rugged and barbarous eloquence of the philosopher, did not scruple at times to call him "an old ass."

"George Suffield!" exclaimed the philosopher now, fervently shaking hands with his host, "I'm glad to see ye again, hale and hearty, out o' that welter o' humanity, that roaring loom o' Time they call London."

"I'm not here for long though, Eben," said Suffield, returning his pressure.

"Yet a little while, I know, man. But ye may abide among

your own people longer than ye at the present thoughtless fleeting moment intend. Ye *may*; I *hope* ye may. The domain of the Possible, man, is immeasurably spacious; there are no limits to the realm of Hope."

"Just so, Eben," said Suffield, "but—"

"Fiddle-de-dee, my dear," said his wife. "The sausages are getting cold; will you help them? I'm much as usual, thank you, Mr. McFie," said she, in answer to the philosopher's polite inquiry concerning her well-being. "Will you sit here? This is my brother, Mr. Harry Raynor; the others you know. Isabel, dear, that's a steak-and-kidney pie before you. You don't look well, my dear; you and Phemy have been out too early."

"I'm very well, thank you, aunt," answered Isabel, recovering herself with an effort; her letter she had already put in her pocket; she feared to finish reading it then.

George watched her with perturbed spirit and jealous eye; from whom, he asked himself, could have come the letter which had caused her such lively emotion, and which she had crammed away unread? From whom but from a lover? And yet her emotion did not seem to be of a pleasant kind. Could it be that the lover was ill? In order to hide his perturbation and to refrain from conversation, George opened out *The Lancashire Gazette*. He found and began to read the notice of the play which he had seen the night before, and which had been discussed on his father's return. He was quickly interested. He usually affected to despise all except metropolitan journalism, but here was vigorous and fearless writing, which he was compelled to respect and admire. He could not contain his interest.

"By jingo!" he exclaimed, "here's Alan Ainsworth, going it like one o'clock!"

"'Going it like one o'clock,'" said the philosopher, pausing with a bit of toast near his mouth, "is a strange phrase of the vulgar tongue; and to the undiscerning eye appears absurd and meaningless. It would be curious to inquire concerning its origin, whence and how—by what association, concatenation, or linking of ideas—it comes to be used to express the extremity of speed, vigor, or abandonment."

That was properly regarded as but a reflective parenthesis that did not demand discussion. Suffield took polite note of it, however.

"Yes; just so, Eben," said he; and then turned to his son with

lively concern, and asked, "Pitching into the play, is he? It's sure to be well done. Read it out, lad."

Isabel, for her part, welcomed this request of her uncle; it would keep curious eyes and questions from herself (she was conscious of appearing pale and disturbed); it would spare her the necessity of making and sharing in conversation; and the interest of the matter might turn her mind a little from the trouble that had seized it. George read, nothing loath, while his father interjected "h'm's" and "ha's" of acceptance or approval, and the philosopher listened with his hand to his ear, and with the air of a man who had been in his time a school-master and an editor, and withal a critic. The article is what is commonly called "a slating" of both play and players, and the "slating" was very vigorously done, spite of the fact that concerning both players and play London was supposed to be very enthusiastic. "A noble tragedy," declared the critic, "which was altogether unsuited to stage representation, has been laid sacrilegious hands on by the playwright and the play-actor, and the result is an indifferent melodrama, badly acted," with much more, general and particular, to the same effect. Finally he said, "Of course the play has been hailed in London as a triumph of stage-management and acting; but it is in reality a triumph of pedantry, dullness, and incapacity."

"What do you think of that?" cried Suffield, in triumph, when the reading was finished. "That's just what you were trying to say last night, I suppose, Isabel?"

"Just what I was *trying* to say, uncle," said Isabel, with a smile.

"Yes," said the philosopher, looking round, perking himself, and clearly demanding the attention of the table; "the young man writes with great promise—great promise, indeed."

"Mr. Ainsworth," said young George, "if I understand him at all, would hope there is performance there as well as promise."

"No doubt, sir; no doubt, my young friend," said the philosopher. Then, eluding the point presented, he continued, "He is right. We are the slaves of rumor. We accept alike the reputation of book or man—"

"Or play," suggested George.

"Or play," accepted the philosopher.

"Or play-actor," suggested George, pleased with his success.

"Or play-actor, sir," again accepted the philosopher. "We accept their reputation, if it be made in London, let us say—"

"Or made in Germany," again suggested George.

"—because," continued the philosopher, without taking account this time of the interruption, "we are ourselves incompetent to distinguish between the estimate of ignorant exaggeration and that of the authentic insight of the few who know what they say, and say only what they know."

"You're eating no breakfast, Mr. McFie," said Mrs. Suffield. "George, my dear, see that Mr. McFie has something;" whereupon Suffield recommended the dish before him.

"Ah," said the philosopher, "I believe that in the great metropolis they call these little things saveloys."

"Sausages, sir; these are sausages," said young George. "Saveloys are, I understand, a very inferior and vulgar kind of sausage."

"Mixed originally, I think the dictionaries say," Isabel was tempted to remark, "with brains, as Sir Joshua Reynolds said his colors were." Then remembering her promise in the garden to Euphemia, she said aside to her, "I beg your pardon, dear."

"Now," said the philosopher, shaking himself up as if he were a bottle of medicine, "I call that very good; really witty, and of the true Attic flavor. I do."

"Oh yes; Isabel's a smart girl," observed Suffield, generally; then, with his kindly eye more particularly on his brother-in-law, he insisted, "I say, Isabel's a clever girl."

"No doubt," said Uncle Harry, while he shrewdly considered his niece.

"Please, uncle," said Isabel, blushing with confusion, and appealing to Suffield in a low voice, "don't!—don't make me ashamed of myself!"

"No need, my lass," said Suffield, aloud, "to be ashamed of yourself."

But Isabel thought there was, especially with Uncle Harry's shrewd eye, which she felt to be cold and critical, fixed on her. She lapsed into a painful silence, on the sudden suspicion that she must appear a very forward and conceited young woman. But why did Uncle Harry, her father's own brother, regard her so? Why did he look at her, not only without affection or tenderness, but (it seemed to her) with absolute aversion? Did she strike him as being so disagreeable a creature either in character or in appearance, or in both?

"But," said the philosopher, seizing the opportunity of the pause, "to return to the interesting subject we were discussing. I said a few moments ago that we are the slaves of rumor. About

this play, now: we either accept the opinion of the great Babylon, borne on the wings of the newspapers, or we accept this young man's opinion."

"I don't," said young George, promptly.

"My dear young sir," said the philosopher, "I question that. You think that you don't. To all but a few"—and there was a clear hint in his eye and his manner that he considered himself one of the few—"current report is irrefutable evidence. To see with our own eyes, to hear with our own ears—"

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Mrs. Suffield, impatiently. "Whose ears should I hear with if not with my own?"

"Ah, my dear lady," cackled on the philosopher, now enjoying himself immensely, "this commonly thought easiest of all things is of things hard to be done one of the hardest—nay, the hardest of all." And so on, and so on, he continued, becoming more and more intoxicated with the sound of his own voice, and swollen with the volume of his own verbosity.

And his audience seemed to listen with attention and interest. The excellent Suffield, however, was the only person who toiled after him through his obscure and sounding platitudes in the single-minded hope of carrying away some wisdom. All the others were more or less occupied with things of livelier and more intimate concern. Mrs. Suffield was thinking over her arrangements for the day, and at the same time giving a ray of attention to her niece, who looked very much less than her usual self that morning; George was still considering, half in pity, half in jealousy, his cousin's preoccupation and depression; Euphemia was chilled and saddened because evidently Isabel cherished a feeling for some one of whom she had refused to let her know; Uncle Harry was wondering whether Isabel added to her faults of self-consciousness and conceit that of sulkiness; and Isabel herself was thinking of that letter which was burning her pocket, and resenting—as unkindly and undeserved—the cold and critical regard under which Uncle Harry was keeping her. The notable thing was that to all save to the philosopher and his simple-minded patron and pupil, and to Isabel herself, the real centre of interest was Isabel.

"Well, now, my dear," said Mrs. Suffield at length to her husband, thrusting into a pause in the philosopher's discourse, "we have a great many things to do to-day, and we haven't yet begun to do any of them. The girls and I must see to things," continued she, rising. "George, my dear, will you ring the bell? If you,

my dear," said she again to her husband, "want to discuss the affairs of the universe with Mr. McFie, you'd better take him into the garden."

"My dear lady," said the philosopher, "I and your husband have had our say, I think." (As matter of fact, Suffield had said nothing but "h'm," or "ye-as," now and then.)

The philosopher rose then, and straggled out through the open French window into the garden. Suffield was politely following him when Uncle Harry laid his hand on his arm.

"Who," he asked, "is your mentor, George?"

"I don't know about mentor," answered Suffield; "but he is a curious, clever creature."

"Strong in the wind, but weak in the legs, I should think, George," said Uncle Harry.

"I shall be back to you in a minute or two, aunt," said Isabel; and she fled to her room and locked herself in to read her letter.

CHAPTER V

ISABEL'S LETTER

ISABEL first considered again the envelope of her letter. It had been, as her Uncle Suffield said, redirected twice. It had first gone to the Ladies' College where she taught; thence it had been sent to her lodgings, whence it had been forwarded to her at her uncle's. The significance of these directions, and the poverty of the paper on which they were written, having been duly pondered, she opened the letter itself. She had seen the handwriting only twice in her life before—yet it ought to have been familiar to her eyes, for it was her father's. The following is the curious epistle which Isabel read, and which the acute reader will find full of suggestion:

"MY D^r CHILD,— You w^l wonder exceed^sly th^t you sh^d hear again f^r y^r poor, unfort^{te} father. I h^l wander^d t^round earth ov^r (tho', as a teacher o^f youth, you are aware th^t t^e earth is not a perfect sphere, but flatten^d at t^e ends o^f t^e axis like an orange) 'fr China to Peru' (*vide* any standrd book o^f quota^{ns}) since last I h^d t^e parent^l del^t o^f writ^s to you. It would achieve no desir^{ble} end to relate to you in det^l my wander^s & adventures, my gains (in-signific^t) & my losses (consider^{ble}), my br^t-wing^d hope & my dull-eyed despair. T^e fact, howev^r, th^t my pres^t address f^r correspond^{ce} is Mrs. Ackland Snow, Tobacconist, Nelson Street, New North Road, N.,— wh^l, as you may be aware, is contigu^s to Merrie Islingtⁿ,—must speak to you w^{an} eloqu^{ce} all its own. Aft^r these diverse experi^{ces} (in t^e main adverse) I am again a miser^{ble} denizen o^f our modern Babylon. Moreover, in t^e humble dwell^s w^{re} I am at pres^t domicil^d I am detain^d as a kind o^f person^l pledge f^r a debt o^f two-twelve-six. I am permitt^d to go out only to call f^r lett^{rs} or to post them, & th^t under t^e vigil^t surveill^{ce} o^f my landlady's son, a sharp London boy who 'has no little handkerch^f'—you know t^e quotⁿ. I expect noth^s as t^e result o^f this communicⁿ, as I deserve noth^s;— yet if we all h^d our deserts—? I h^l t^e unshakⁿ convicⁿ, however,

th' there still resides in y^r bosom some filial regards tords him who,
tho' unworthy o t name, cannot but subscribe hims^f

Your father,

JOHN RAYNOR."

Two or three things were obviously remarkable about this letter: it was written on a half-sheet of paper, which was of as poor quality as that of the envelope; it contained contractions in spelling which suggested that the writer either had or had had experience of some walk in journalism; and it expressed sentiments and made statements which very plainly implied that John Raynor was a somewhat shady and shifty person.

Isabel stood by her dressing-table in the light of the window, and looked meditatively forth into the sunlit garden, while she mechanically folded and folded again the flimsy paper in her hand till it was of the appearance of a pipe-light. This was the third letter she had received from her father, and all three were in the same strain. The first came to her four years before, when she was first appointed teacher in the Ladies' College, and she had replied to it with money and the request that her father would let her see him. That, however, he refused to do; but he begged for more money to go to America and to take up a "literary appointment" which had been offered him: and that was his second letter. She had answered it as he had desired, with considerable difficulty, and had heard no more until now. The four years which had passed since her father had gone to America had widened considerably not only her knowledge of books, but her understanding also of men and women; so that this third letter appeared as to a different person, and provoked doubts and apprehensions altogether new. The father who thus wrote to her she had not seen since she was five years old, when her mother had died and her aunt had taken charge of her. She had, therefore, but a dim recollection of him (a dull child would probably have had no recollection at all), but such recollection as she had, which had been awakened and clarified by the sight of her uncle, was bewildered by the letter. Her father, as she now recalled him, was much taller than her uncle (but that, she admitted to herself, might be only in the view of a child to whom all grown-up people seem tall), but in other ways he was like her uncle: he was reticent and serious, and seemed severe. He was, therefore, scarcely the person (it now occurred to her) to write such an epistle as that she held between her fingers, or as those she had re-

ceived four years before. Could it be, she asked herself suddenly, that she had been imposed upon by this person whom she had believed to be her father, because he had so represented himself, and because he had recalled certain family matters which, she had thought, only her father could know? She might, she considered, have her doubt set at rest by showing the letter to either of her uncles, and saying, "Tell me if this be my father's hand or no!" But then she remembered that her Uncle George had remarked when he handed her the letter that he "ought to know the fist"—as if he dimly recognized it—and she shrank from making known, even to her uncles, her father's condition, if this person who had written as her father were her father, indeed.

She still hoped he was. For when her father (or this person who was not her father) had first written to her she had had a waking dream of the kind that was sure to invade a good and generous girl. She had gathered vaguely and at intervals, during her school-time when she spent her holidays at her uncle's, that her father, if he was not dead, was leading a life of so disreputable a sort that his existence must be ignored. She had not ventured to ask either her aunt or her uncle what his offences were; but her aunt was so severe and even unjust to her on occasion that she concluded her father's faults must be neither unforgivable nor irremediable. When, therefore, he put himself in communication with her, her heart leaped forth to help and save him. Her impulse was not so much that of a daughter as that of a mother.

Men are slow to recognize—slower to believe—that the earliest and the most potent affection of a good girl of strong character is maternal. She first expends it upon her dolls and her younger brothers and sisters (when she has them), and then she lavishes it upon her lover, who is somewhat bewildered by this divine mixture of feeling for himself until he is husband and father, when the new feeling in his own breast teaches him to understand hers. Isabel's circumstances had dammed up the flow of this kind of affection. She had been too clever in her girlhood, and too much occupied with books and duties to be seriously concerned about dolls; neither her cousins nor her fellow-pupils at school had needed her attentions. It was, therefore, with all the more overwhelming volume that this maternal feeling rushed towards her father when he made himself known. He had turned it back again by his refusal to see her and by his flight to America, but again it was seeking vent now that he was returned and was within reach—if

it was indeed he who had written to her. She passionately hoped that it might be he.

As she considered and hoped she resolved what she would do; for Nature and training had conspired to make her a person of quick decision. She would send some money at once, with a promise to send more in a few days—when, that is, she would be in London, and could observe and discover for herself the person who would call for it. She would stop him and speak to him; if he were not her father, then all would be at an end; but if he were, then—oh, then!—with what passionate joy would she take him to her heart, to tend and comfort him, to strengthen and restore him. It never occurred to her to doubt whether her father, if found, would be worth such wealth of love; for her feeling was of the serene quality of divine mercy which regards no sinner as beyond hope of redemption.

A tap sounded at her door, and a voice—Euphemia's—said: "Bel, dear, will you be long? Mother wants us to go into town."

There at once presented was Isabel's desired opportunity.

"I'll put my things on and be down in a moment," answered she.

When she descended (with her purse and her letter in her pocket) she found that her aunt and her cousin had gone into the regions of the kitchen. Thither she followed them, and came upon both at the back door of the mansion. Her aunt was then a person to behold and consider. The front of her stately figure was arrayed in a large linen apron with a bib, and she was superintending the unloading of a baker's van piled with buns for the children's Whitsuntide "treat" in the park that day. She had torn open one of the buns to judge if they were well-baked and white within, and to ascertain that they were not too meagrely supplied with currents. She stood eating a morsel and holding the fragments in her hand, while she counted with the baker the fourteen to the dozen which he threw into great baskets waiting to receive them. And Isabel, as she beheld and considered, wondered for the first time whether the prosperity of the house of Suffield was mainly due to the husband or to the wife.

That duty accomplished, her aunt turned to her with a keen but not unkindly look—a look, indeed, which seemed to say, "There's something wrong; I wish we two understood each other better." What she actually did say was, "You're not looking quite yourself, Bel. No bad news, I hope?"

"No, aunt," answered Isabel; "it's nothing to speak of. It's only a letter that has been forwarded to me from London."

"Of course," said her aunt, somewhat dryly, with the clear significance of "I knew *that*." But she added, "I only hoped you had nothing to really worry you. I don't want to pry into your private concerns."

"I have no private concerns of any consequence, aunt," she said, with a blush.

"Well," said her aunt, dismissing the matter, "I want you and Phemy to go into town—the horses are being put into the landau—and order these things"—producing a list from her pocket—"at our draper's, Wigmore & Kendal. You will see the kind of things they have in stock. You know what I like, and if you see they haven't got the proper things, tell them to get them somewhere else or to get them made. When all the order is ready, tell them the things are to be sent to that address a week hence—Rutland Gate, London, W."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Euphemia, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Are we really going to London, then, for the season?"

"Yes, my dear," said her mother, looking on her with indulgent eye, "we are going to London. Your father has taken the house and most of the furniture over from the Earl of Padiham."

"What!" exclaimed Euphemia. "The Earl of Padiham that lives out here on the moors?"

"To be sure, my dear," said her mother, with a laugh. "You don't suppose the peerage can contain two Earls of Padiham."

"What! Isn't it big enough to hold two, mother?"

"Don't be a goose," said Mrs. Suffield, with a touch of severity; for she suspected her daughter was inclined to gibe, and she caught a twinkle of amusement passing from her niece's eye. "Now make haste, both of you. The carriage is waiting, I've no doubt."

"But," asked her daughter, "aren't you going to tell me all about our going to London?"

"Tell you all about it! There's time enough for that before we go. One thing at a time. Be off now and do your business." They were hurrying away when she called after them, "You might call at the office of the *Gazette* on your way back, both of you, and bring Mr. Ainsworth along; he is usually there, I think, just before lunch-time, and he's capital at amusing children—almost as good as yourself, Bel."

Isabel accepted the suggestion with silence. She understood

completely the intention of her aunt. She had perceived before to-day that her aunt did her utmost to bring Alan Ainsworth and her together, partly, perhaps, because she liked the young journalist, but more, no doubt, because she had a loftier ambition for her son than he had for himself.

CHAPTER VI

ALAN AINSWORTH

THE editorial sanctum of a leading provincial newspaper of these days is almost as unapproachable by the vulgar as that of the *Times* itself. It may be set in quite as imposing a building, and may be the centre of almost as great a spider's web of political "influence," "special" correspondence, and news "agency" as the journal that boasts the largest circulation in the world: that may be taken for granted without further insistence. The terra-cotta palace inhabited by *The Lancashire Gazette* is reckoned an ornament of one of the finest and busiest streets of the city which claims to be the heart and soul of the County Palatine, and the editor's room is the finest, though not the largest, of all the rooms in that palace.

While Isabel and her cousin were busy with their shopping, about that mid-day hour when the growing young men in the office became wistfully interested in the impassive face of the office clock, a somewhat stoutish and florid gentleman stood on the hearth-rug of the editorial room in the attitude which none but its master would have ventured to adopt. His hands were behind him, and his coat-tails were parted, though the grate was empty, and he stood squarely and solidly, bearing a little on his toes as he measured out his utterances, and marking the emphasis of his words with that slight motion of the head which is all the reserved and weighty Englishman permits himself by way of gesture. This was Frederick Smith, the famous chief of *The Lancashire Gazette*. He was an admirable example of the kind of person ticketed by Carlyle as "able editor," and he was addressing no casual caller, for no such common mortal would be admitted to his presence. Before him paced irregularly to and fro, making occasional pauses for speech, a tall, spare, and broad-shouldered young man, excited and flushed.

"I think, sir," said the young man, when they had been talking thus for some time, "that if a critic must not express his honest convictions you might as well get a reporter to do his work."

"You are a young man, Mr. Ainsworth," said the able editor, "and I say this for your good: it is part of the intolerance of youth to be always wishing to utter its 'honest convictions,' and it is part of the regret of maturer years to know that the 'honest convictions' of youth have been only impatient prejudices. That you will discover before you are as old as I am, and I certainly must ask you in the meantime to tone down the severity of your dramatic notices."

"If I cannot say, sir," said Ainsworth, "what I honestly think and feel about a performance, I had rather not do the theatres at all."

"Very well, Mr. Ainsworth," said the editor; "that is a point for yourself alone to decide, though I would advise you not to be rash. I like your work; in other respects it suits me completely, and I should be sorry to lose it. Think it over."

And the able editor took his right hand from behind him, and held it out for Ainsworth to shake. Ainsworth grasped it, dropped it, and went.

For an apparently impetuous man Ainsworth descended the stairs soberly and slowly. On the next landing he encountered a fellow-member of the staff of the *Gazette*—a dapper young gentleman, who was reputed the most slashing and redoubtable political writer in the Palatinate. Ainsworth nodded to him, and was about to pass on when the dapper young man stopped and spoke.

"Capital notice that of yours this morning," said he, "of the theatre last night. Splendid bit of criticism—straight and clear."

"I'm glad you like it," said Ainsworth.

"Yes, I was glad to see it. The play and the players have been too much cockered up by the London papers, and it's an agreeable change to find a critic in the provinces giving them a slating. How does the chief like it?" he asked, with a thin, sly smile.

"The chief," answered Ainsworth, with reserve, "cannot be said to be in love with it."

"I thought not. Never mind. Bye-bye."

And the two went their several ways—Ainsworth down into the street, and the dapper young gentleman up into the chief's presence.

When Ainsworth had left the building he stood a moment in hesitation, and then turned down a side street, as a man resolved upon a certain course. He entered the restaurant where it was his habit to lunch, but since it was not quite his time for luncheon,

and since he felt no pressing demand of hunger (his blood was too much determined to his head for that), he merely stood at the bar to eat a hurried biscuit and drink a glass of soda-and-milk. It was too early for any of his fellow-journalists and acquaintances to be about, and of that he was glad; for he knew that he must look rather glum and preoccupied, and that if his friends saw him so he would be beset with worrying questions or gibes. His modest biscuit being consumed, he sallied forth and returned into the main street.

He felt the absolute necessity of doing something; his intense excitement was as the rapid generation of steam, impelling him to locomotion. He must go somewhere; he must walk, walk, to revolve and grind away the grave annoyance and anxiety that troubled him. Where should he go? The town would not do; the pavements were crowded, and the thought of dodging and jostling other foot-passengers was painful to him. While he thus considered, he saw a shining open carriage and pair draw up at the curb a little way ahead of him. He had a keen eye, and he recognized at once the occupants of the carriage—a regal-looking dark beauty and a fairy-like fair one, both young, and both arrayed in light, summery raiment. They were the daughter and the niece of the excellent Suffield. The tall and stately lady—the niece—descended from the carriage, while the men hurrying by on the pavement cast over their shoulders admiring glances, which Ainsworth resented on her behalf. She stepped into a post-office, over against which the carriage had stopped, and Ainsworth turned away that he might not be recognized by the other lady, and jumped upon a passing omnibus.

The encounter avoided, he began to think he was a fool for his pains. Why had he shunned a meeting with these ladies, the one of whom he admired as the best read, the most intelligent, and the most beautiful woman he had ever known?—why, except that the trouble which was worrying him drew him away from contact and from speech with friend or acquaintance. The sight of them, however, made him think of his good friend Suffield, and the thought of him suggested a walk in the varied and extensive Holdsworth Park. He had a problem and a corollary to solve, and he resolved on a solitary walk to solve them. The omnibus on which he was riding passed the necessary railway station; so there he descended from the knife-board, and entered and took a ticket for Holdsworth.

CHAPTER VII

HOW AINSWORTH SOLVED HIS PROBLEM

WHEN he was on the platform among a crowd of people he began to wonder whether the days of the week, as well as he, had gone wrong; by the calendar it should be Wednesday, and yet the show of the platform was that of Saturday. When he entered the train—he travelled third class, as every intelligent, humane, and self-respecting young man should travel—and observed that he was in the midst of those who were plainly holiday-makers, he was certain the times must be out of joint. Then, suddenly, he remembered it was Whitsuntide; and that explained all. For Whitsuntide is the great Feast—as it were, the Feast of Tabernacles—of Lancashire. In the South men forget that it is Whitsuntide after Tuesday, but in Lancashire it is Whitsuntide from Sunday to Sunday. Then manufactures, mining, and handicrafts are mostly idle for a week; then the voice of the cornet and the fife are heard in the land, and then the whole population “wallers” (like Tom Sawyer) “in Sunday-schools,” Sunday-school treats, and Sunday-school processions.

All these manners and customs of Whitsuntide Ainsworth was well enough acquainted with, but he had forgotten it was Whitsuntide. Now that he remembered, he was struck with its significance. Were it not that he was being whirled to Holdsworth as fast as the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company could carry him, he would have stayed in town; for he was sure that Holdsworth Park would be overrun by the gay and free young Sunday scholar. But he must go on; and he comforted himself with the thought that, at the worst, Holdsworth Park was large enough to afford some seclusion, even after the Sunday scholars had all the elbow-room they wanted.

At Holdsworth not many passengers left the train. They went their several ways, and he alone went on to Holdsworth Park. In the lane leading towards the village he witnessed a scene which reminded him of a similar one in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, a

scene which it would be impossible to see enacted out of our dear, delightful, absurd, but good-humored England. From opposite directions came, with brazen bands and flaunting banners, the Sunday-school processions of church and chapel, and Ainsworth mounted the bank to witness the encounter; for the lane was not wide enough to permit each to pass the other freely. On they came, with clergyman and pastor at their head, like captains of their troop, and with school-teachers distributed along their flanks like sergeants and corporals. When they met, however, the one did not pass triumphantly through the other, as in *Shirley*, but each halted. The captain of each troop made a sign for silence to his band; he then approached his vis-à-vis with his hat off, and shook hands with him, and after that gave the word for the band to strike up again—this time the same sacred tune. The bands played the tune through together, the troops facing each other as much as was possible, while some of the non-commissioned and private on either side looked not too well pleased with the situation. Ainsworth, however, was delighted; if the scene was a trifle absurd, it was friendly and humane; and when, the music in common being played, the two troops filed past each other as best they could, he said to himself, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” But, if I am not mistaken, the real cause of this display of good feeling is that very kindly gentleman, George Suffield. It is impossible for both parson and pastor to be friendly with him (as I am sure they must be) and not to be friendly with each other. So shines a good man in a naughty world.”

Thus thinking of the admirable Suffield, and all his humane and generous ways, he wandered on into the tidy trim village, and forgot for the time his own anxiety. The village seemed deserted of all save a few of the very oldest and the very youngest of its population. Here and there a gaffer or a gammer sat on a doorstep or on a stool against the wall, blinking and basking in the sun, and holding in a striving youngster with a tether of web selvedge and the impassiveness of Fate. Here and there a cat lay on a window-sill, limp with heat and looking like a dish-clout flung out to dry; and here and there a dog spread himself at ease in the warm dust of the road, as if he well knew there was no danger to be apprehended from passing cabs or other vehicles that day. Through this peaceful scene Ainsworth passed, knowing well its meaning: that all the active population were gone to disport and to feast in Holdsworth Park.

He continued on his way till he reached the lake or dam. He walked to a spot on its bank where grew some alders, and threw himself on the turf that sprang soft and green in their shade. Ducks and swans swam towards him in expectation of crumbs; but he had none to give them, and they left him with sounds of derision. Thus undisturbed and abstracted, he at length turned his attention to the purpose for which he had made this excursion. He put it in his pipe with his bird's-eye, and for some time smoked with great deliberation. He had, as I have said, a problem to solve and a corollary, but the corollary proved (like a lady's postscript) to be the more important of the two. Should he—as his editor had desired—"tone down the severity of his dramatic criticism? Certainly not! What? Write to the prompting of something older than his judgment!—to the dictation of some other than himself! Surrender his right of opinion, which any young man in the pit could freely exercise! Of what use was criticism if it was not free? He would maintain the birthright of the critic. That meant, therefore, that he must resign his post on *The Lancashire Gazette*; which implied that he must seek occupation elsewhere. But where? Since ever he had left Oxford and come to Lancashire he had looked forward to a London career: was the time arrived for that? He doubted it. It would be a perilous thing to launch himself on the wide sea of London journalism with no better recommendation than that he had quarrelled with the editor of *The Lancashire Gazette*. But if he could not risk the resignation of his present post, he must fall in with the wish of his chief, and "tone down," etc., and that, of course, he could not do. Yet— And so the discussion with himself went on in the undecisive way we all know.

While he smoked and revolved these things, he let his eyes idly rove about the lake and over the features of a new building which Suffield had reared upon the opposite bank—a building which Ainsworth believed was set apart for some new and secret process of calico-printing. As his eye ranged vaguely from window to window suddenly he saw, as it were, a vision of a black face and a white turban. What had overcome him that such an hallucination should present itself to him then? He took his pipe from his mouth, rubbed his hand across his eyes, and looked again. The vision had disappeared; but as he continued looking, slow to believe that what he had seen was merely a creature of his brain, he saw it again at another window; again the black head and neck (with the

face half averted), and the white turban! He looked steadily, and saw the head pass slowly from window to window, as if the person to whom the head was attached were attentively examining everything as he moved along! It was difficult not to believe that he saw a living human being; and yet how was it possible that a black man in a white turban should be alone in a Lancashire mill? It would not be more strange to see some morning a Moorish Kadi sitting crossed-legged on the bench of magistrates of the borough.

He jumped up, determined to have his doubts settled, and made his way round towards the building. He was brought up short, however, by finding that the great gates which admitted to the precincts of the works were firmly closed, as was also the little postern against the lodge. It seemed, too, that the lodge and gate keeper must be making holiday with the rest; for no knocking on his door or on the postern brought any response. Ainsworth, therefore, turned away, and went back to the spot under the alders, whence he had seen the vision of the black man. He waited for some time, but no black man reappeared; and then he wandered down the clough.

The more he thought of his vision the more it disturbed him. It disturbed him more than it would have disturbed a man of less knowledge and speculation. He knew, for instance, that Suffield had some secret of his business shut up in that building where he had seen the black man; he knew that in the town there were several Parsee merchants, active with real intellectual activity, and crafty with true Eastern craft; and he knew that the Parsees of Bombay were at that hour striving their utmost to compete with Lancashire for the cotton and calico trade of India. What more likely, then, than that a creature of theirs should be commissioned to spy out what he could of Suffield's successful methods? He resolved to seek Suffield out and tell him what he had seen.

He crossed the stream by a narrow foot-bridge, and climbed the opposite side of the clough to enter the park. He crossed into the park by that stile on which Suffield had sat in the early morning, and then—to his amazement—saw sauntering on before him a man in a white turban and a kind of white blouse girt about with a red sash or *cummerbund*. He quickened his pace to overtake the man. When he had overtaken him he was at a loss what to do. He could not demand brusquely, "Are you the per-

son I saw in one of the buildings of Suffield's works?" That appeared to him uncalled-for rudeness even to a black man, who is, after all (as the undergraduate said of his tutor), "a man and a brother." Not knowing what else to do, he was therefore passing on when the black man made him pause.

"Respectable sir," said he, bowing low, with his black hands crossed on his white bosom, "fine Englishman, with regards may I say?"

Ainsworth stopped, and the black man smiled upon him in a simple, childlike way that should have banished suspicion. But Ainsworth felt a stern sense of duty; moreover, although the man's words were intelligible, his meaning was not, and he consequently did not smile in return.

"Do you mean," he asked, "that you wish to speak to me?"

"Sir," said Daniel (for of course it was he), "you truly mention it. If you look for the parties of amusement, I beg to say they are almost at the dining of the people; and besides several national foods, curries made by me from fine recipes at your respectable service, sir; hope you like an economical dish which little care and attention is given to it."

"Thank you very much," said Ainsworth, feeling that the man meant well, however he expressed himself. "May I ask if you also belong to the parties of amusement?"

"No, sir," answered Daniel, smiling again; "the fact is, I myself am servant, cook, etcetera, to the Sahib Raynor, now staying at the great hall."

"What! Mr. Raynor, the traveller? He has come, then?"

"With regard to your speeches, sir, the Sahib Raynor came the day before it was yesterday."

"And do you," said Ainsworth, foolishly thinking to catch the black man unawares—"do you often have business down there at the works all by yourself?"

"Sir," said Daniel, smiling most serenely, "I take myself all alone for agreeable walks in the scenery; I range my mind; I improve myself in the great England and Lancashire; and I practise the conversations and the ways and the means. Good-morning; good-bye, sir."

Bewildered to find the right meaning in that maze of words, and rebuffed in his attempt to catch the man out, Ainsworth said "Good-bye" somewhat gruffly, and went on his way. In the park, outside the lawn before the mansion, he saw there was a great tent

pitched, towards which streams of stragglers were setting from all quarters, and in and out of which men and women were hasting and flitting like bees to and from a hive. It seemed the centre of interest and activity, and towards it, therefore, he bent his steps. While he was yet a good way off, Suffield hailed him from the door of the tent.

"Holloa, Ainsworth! Come along, my son; better late than never." With him stood a young lady in white (his daughter, Ainsworth could see), and when the young man reached him he continued: "My little girl here and her cousin called for you at the office to bring you along in the carriage, but you were gone—earlier than usual, eh?"

"I am sorry I missed them," answered Ainsworth, saluting Suffield's daughter. "But I dare say I did leave the office a little earlier than I commonly do."

But Suffield was evidently thinking of something else already: the thought which would always come uppermost in his mind was how he could do a good turn to a friend, especially to the friend that at the moment was by him.

"You've heard of Lord Clitheroe, the Earl of Padiham's son?" said he, laying his hand on Ainsworth's shoulder, and speaking in his ear. "This is he;" referring with his thumb to a tall, full-bearded young man, who stood a step behind him talking with Miss Suffield, with critical but admiring eyes bent upon her. "He's a clever fellow; you ought to know him; he's a rising politician."

Then turning, with his hand still on Ainsworth's shoulder, he said (before Ainsworth could utter yea or nay): "Clitheroe, let me introduce to you my friend, Mr. Alan Ainsworth. I think you two should know each other."

It was done easily, without the slightest vulgar touch of ostentation or obsequiousness, as if George Suffield had been to the manner born; which Ainsworth was inclined to wonder at, till he considered that, after all, the best prompters of good manners are a gentle heart and a generous nature. Lord Clitheroe responded to the introduction as it had been made, easily and frankly.

"Oh yes," said he; "I remember Mr. Ainsworth at Oxford."

"Oh, ah," said Suffield; "sort of college-chums."

"Scarcely so much as that," said Ainsworth, with a slight hint in his voice of his appreciation of the difference in their rank. "I think it was only at the Union that Lord Clitheroe and I met."

"And bitterly denounced each other's politics," added Lord Clitheroe.

"That's all right," said Suffield. "A good stand-up fight of any sort is the best way of beginning to be friends. But Ainsworth's line is different now; he is great as a dramatic critic. Didn't you read the notice of the play in the *Gazette* this morning, Clitheroe?"

"I did," answered Clitheroe, "and liked it very much."

"That's more than my editor did," said Ainsworth, with a laugh. "He says I mustn't write like that any more."

"So ho!" exclaimed Suffield. "You'll have to cut the *Gazette*, then?"

"I have just been turning the matter over," said Ainsworth—"considering what I shall do."

"You must come to London, my lad," said Suffield, clapping his hand on his shoulder. "That's the place for you. I'll manage it for you."

"You are very good," said Ainsworth. "I dare say it will have to come to that."

"Of course it will. But now we are forgetting this spread for the folk. I think we must all lend a hand—mustn't we, Phemy?—to get it in order."

"If you will come with me, Mr. Ainsworth," said Phemy, "we shall soon get the other things that are wanted. We are going to decorate the tables a little, you know, with flowers; our people love flowers."

"I'm sure you must have taught them that, Miss Suffield," said Lord Clitheroe, gallantly.

"Oh no, I haven't," said Phemy, with a candid look of surprise.

So it came to pass that in a minute or two Ainsworth entered with Miss Suffield the ample conservatories attached to the Hall. They had barely entered when she exclaimed that she had forgotten something.

"Wait here for me," said she, and fled.

Left alone, he wandered slowly down between the terraces of gorgeous and richly-scented flowers, thinking of nothing in particular, but letting the beauty and the odor of the bewildering array of blooms subdue his senses. Presently he came upon a glass door, which he opened. He found himself in a wide inner apartment of glass and flowers, which he at once recognized as the conservatory immediately annexed to the drawing-room. On the tiled floor were

spread costly Persian rugs, and in the centre was a small fountain, in the sunken basin of which grew rare specimens of water-lilies. He was no sooner in than he heard voices, whether in the conservatory or just within the drawing-room he could not tell, for a big flowering magnolia prevented him from seeing any person. He turned to withdraw; but the latch had somehow caught, and the door would not open. He had a mind to go forward when certain words that caught his ear prevented him.

"Hush! there is some one coming," said one voice—the voice of Miss Raynor. "I like you very much," she continued, evidently in reply to something said by another voice; "but I prefer you to still be my kind cousin, George. So, please, don't speak to me of these things again."

"Then, Bel," said the other voice—the voice of young George Suffield—in an aggrieved and somewhat sulky tone, "there is some one you've got to know in London; and that letter this morning was from him."

"I think it is unworthy of you, George, to say that," said Isabel. "If it were another than you that said it I should just be silent and let him believe what he liked. But we are cousins, George; we have grown up together, and I am very sorry I cannot be what you wish; and so I tell you frankly there is no person in London of the kind you mean."

"If there is not," urged George, "why do you refuse to listen to me. See, Bel, I've waited for you ever since I was a little boy; it's not fair—it's not right—of you to say 'no' to me so easily and promptly."

"Oh, George, I don't say it easily nor promptly. I say it reluctantly, and I say it with pain. If I were a young, thoughtless girl, and did not believe that a woman should feel towards a man she means to live with always very much more than I feel towards you, I might even have said 'yes.'"

"You may say 'yes' yet, Bel. We shall understand each other better after this. Do not answer me at all now. Wait awhile; wait a year, if you like. Do that; won't you, Bel?"

"Very well," said Isabel, after a moment's hesitation. "If it will make you happy, George, I'll wait."

"Thank you, Bel. Thank you—and bless you."

"Don't, George," said she, as if in repulse of some slight attempt to embrace her. "Be good, and control yourself."

Then George withdrew by the drawing-room, and Isabel appeared

round the magnolia and stood before Ainsworth, whose thought and pulse were in a turmoil.

"Forgive me," he stammered, with his eyes down; he did not dare to raise them. "I wandered in here by this door; and when I heard voices and tried to go back the door would not open, and I could not go on and appear before you."

She said not a word, nor stirred; and he raised his eyes to look at her. Upon that—as if the expression of his face and the light in his eyes at once betrayed him to her—she was suffused with an overwhelming blush; she looked at the closed door behind him, and turned and fled like a stricken deer.

Yes; Ainsworth now understood, without recognizing, himself. The jealousy, sharp and wild, which seized him when he discovered that another man was seeking to win this lady, and the mad suspicion that others also might think her love worth winning, precipitated feelings which had long been hanging about him like a haze. Now he saw in a burning light that it was a matter of the supremest moment that Isabel Raynor should love him, and him alone. Now he felt himself a new, a stronger, a more resolute, a more clear-seeing and alert man. His problem was solved and its corollary. His way was made plain before him: he must leave Lancashire and *The Lancashire Gazette*, and compel reluctant Fortune to befriend him in that London where Isabel lived and moved and had her being.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE GREAT WHITE FEAST

IN a few seconds Euphemia came and released Ainsworth from his embarrassing confinement. She laughed at his serious and wondering face, thinking it was due to anxiety lest she should not find him.

"But," said she, peeping round the magnolia, "you might have got out through the drawing-room; I see the door is open."

"Oh yes," said he; "I dare say I might have got out through the drawing-room."

He helped her to collect and to carry out such flowering plants as she selected, but all in so absent-minded a way that still she laughed and chaffed him; and he smiled and bore it, for he was so possessed and interpenetrated with the glow of his new feeling that he was insensible to the shafts of ridicule. He was in love, and love was in him; and he knew it. For let it be noted that there is an important difference in what are called "affairs of the heart" between most men and women. Man as man is open, direct, and simple in his feelings; woman as woman is secret, involved, and complex. So it comes to pass that when a man is really touched with love's fitful fever he is commonly able to diagnose himself; he knows what is the matter with him, and acts accordingly. A woman, on the other hand, seldom recognizes when she is in love; she may be very far gone, plunged beyond hope of recovery, and yet not know it; and even when she may suspect where she is she clouds, obfuscates, or glozes the fact to herself, and calls it something else—until the man speaks, and then—

Thus the twinge caused by the talk overheard in the conservatory had made Ainsworth recognize what had happened to him, and, recognizing it, he was resolved to win the only assuagement possible—the love of the woman who had touched his heart. Isabel, on her part, was troubled and distressed at what had occurred; she saw no reason, nor had she the inclination, to blame Ainsworth for it; but she began from that hour to take more note of him, to

underline, so to say, her interest in him, without in the least suspecting what had happened, or was happening, to herself.

In something less than half an hour Ainsworth's journeyings with Euphemia and the flower-pots to and from the marquee were at an end, the tables were set forth, and the guests were all assembled and were settling down into their places; then he chanced to glance across a space of table, and he suddenly came to himself. He knew that a man, whom he felt must have been he, had been for some time hurrying to and fro, but whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, and what he had been doing he could not tell; now, however, he saw plainly where he was and knew clearly who he was; for there, a little way off, on the other side of the table, stood she—the one *she* in the world for him!—her face flushed and smiling above her white diaphanous raiment, and her eyes sparkling like glorious jewels beneath her crown of dark hair. She was in reality just as she had been half an hour before, save, perhaps, for the new animation of her bearing, but to Ainsworth's inspired eyes she appeared transfigured into a vision of the supremest loveliness of life and health, of body and mind. The sight of her intoxicated and dazzled him, till she glanced his way and their eyes met, when the frank intelligence and confidence of her look soothed and steadied him.

There was neither time nor opportunity then for other communication; for part of the fun and formula of that feast was that the chief members of the household and the chief guests must act as stewards. At the head of one table Suffield generously carved a great joint of beef, at the head of the second his son carved another joint, and at a third the mistress of the house herself dispensed smaller dishes, while her daughter and her niece, Lord Clitheroe and Mr. Ainsworth, the clergyman of the church and the minister of the chapel and their "respectable" wives—as Daniel would have said—aided the domestics of the house, hung round the tables, and saw that the feasters had what they desired to eat and drink. In passing thus to and fro Ainsworth hovered near Isabel's presence; yet not too near, nor even as near as he might have gone, for he felt there was a line to pass beyond which would have been familiar, if not rude. The feasters were all heads of households in the village—fathers and mothers, and some grandfathers and grandmothers; for the unmarried and the young were still kicking their heels outside, waiting for their turn at the tables, even as they were waiting for their complete innings at life. While the elder

people still kept their seats and the younger still hung outside, a foreman got upon his feet to propose the health of "oor mester and mistress," and Suffield responded in a speech which took and held Ainsworth's attention. He had never before had the opportunity of considering his friend as a public speaker, and now as he listened he was surprised and delighted to think he had in him the essentials of a popular orator. He spoke clearly, in simple, straightforward language, with unconscious dignity and sweetness of temper, and with feeling and humor, so that his audience followed him with cheerful understanding, and now felt the springing of moisture to the eyes, and now broke into the heartiest laughter. His anecdotes were naturally the best appreciated parts of his speech; to that audience they were as the plums of a pudding, for they were told in the strong and racy Lancashire dialect (which it would be impossible to reproduce here intelligibly), and they were seized on by the untravelled and unlearned natives as their exclusive property. While they roared with laughter they glanced round upon their attendant superiors with the clear meaning in their eyes: "What do you think of that for a story? Of course you don't understand it; but we do."

Ainsworth paid heed to all these things, and in so doing he moved (perhaps not quite unwittingly) closer to Isabel. When the speech was finished and the cheering had ceased he was fluttered and delighted anew by her turning to him with a gracious smile and a divine blush, and saying on the impulse:

"What a delightful speech! Don't you think so? I had no idea that Uncle George was so good a speaker."

"Nor I," answered Ainsworth, with pleased alacrity, and his words came in a nervous, hurried stream. "It is a model speech for the occasion—simple, pathetic, and humorous. And such capital stories he told! I didn't understand them a bit myself—I haven't Lancashire enough, though I am half a Lancashire man; but I saw they were caught and understood by all the folk. An admirable speech! Mr. Suffield ought to become a great platform orator."

"Do you think so really?" asked Isabel, with a touch of deference, as if to better instructed opinion than her own. "I should like to hear him make a speech in Parliament."

"Ah," said Ainsworth, "I believe that's not quite the same thing. I don't know of myself, but I've always heard that a man may be an admirable platform speaker, and quite fail as a speaker in the House. I can quite understand that; can't you?"

"Oh yes. Just as a clergyman may be a very good preacher, but a duffer—duffer is the word, is it not?"—(he laughed more hilariously than was quite necessary)—"a duffer when he gets up to speak among his brethren."

"That's it. You put it excellently. Of course I don't mean that Mr. Suffield would be a failure; but as you so well said, success of the one kind doesn't necessarily imply success of the other."

With a woman's fine intuition, Isabel perceived his nervous eagerness to please, and in a measure understood its cause. She therefore became more self-possessed, indulgent, and expansive, though she did not dare to let the talk drop, for fear of the reflection that might spring up in the pause.

"I can't," said she, "know so much of these feelings as you—"

"But why not?" he interrupted. "You seem to me to be thoroughly acquainted with everything, and to be able to set men right in many things—you do."

"Really, Mr. Ainsworth," she laughed—a laugh which showed that the praise though extravagant was agreeable—"if I could believe you mean what you say, I should be puffed up with conceit."

"But I *do* mean what I say; I mean everything that I say," he urged, fervently.

"And so you are waiting to see me puffed up?" She laughed again.

"No, no, no; you are too wise, you have too much ballast, to be puffed up."

"You mean," said she, "that I am too wise to be puffed up; and even if I were puffed up, I have too much ballast to be carried away? Really, really, Mr. Ainsworth, your compliment, after all, proves gross and equivocal!"

"You are right, you are right, of course. But at the same time you prove the truth of what I said—that you can set men right in many things; don't you see? But you were going to say something when I interrupted you."

"Oh, I was going to say only that, though I know nothing of politics, I think it is possible that Uncle George may be a success in Parliament. He will try hard to be, I know; for my aunt has that ambition for him, and he always likes to please her."

"That's very beautiful of him now," exclaimed he, "after so many years of married life!"

"Yes," said she, as if she had been suddenly provoked to consider the point, "I suppose it is."

"Not many couples, I fancy," said he, "have such confidence and belief in each other after a quarter of a century of marriage."

"No; I dare say not," said she, and showed an inclination to plunge into a reverie on the matter. But she shook off the inclination and said: "That's chiefly why uncle has taken a great house in London."

"Oh!" exclaimed he. "*Has* he taken a house in London?"

"Didn't you know?" said she. "The town-house of Lord Clitheroe's father, the Earl of Padiham. And the family is going to live there regularly, except George; he is going to remain here and manage all the business, I believe."

While the conversation had been in progress, faint blushes had been coming and going on Isabel's countenance; but on the chance mention of George's name a blinding blush swept over her, making her look down in confusion and Ainsworth look away in sympathy. He relieved her, however, by continuing the talk without heeding what she had said of George.

"I'm going to London, too," said he.

"Are you really?" she asked, with a quick look of lively interest. "I had not heard of it before."

"I only resolved on it to-day," said he; and added, hurriedly, on the sudden fear that she would connect his resolution with the scene in the conservatory: "I've had a word or two with my editor, and I've practically no alternative but to resign my post; I must either change my style of criticism or go. I prefer to go."

"Of course," said Isabel, at length showing that unconsciousness of herself which was one of her chief charms.

"I hope," said he, "when we are both in London I shall often have the pleasure of meeting you."

"No doubt we shall meet," said she, looking thoughtful. "But excuse my saying it—I hope you have something in prospect in London."

"Well," said he, with a laugh, "I believe there are ever so many birds in the bush, though I confess I have not one in the hand."

"You have the Lancashire bird still in your hand—have you not?" she said.

"You mean to suggest," said he, "that I am not wise in letting it go? There are risks, of course; but every movement is attended with some risk, and"—he continued with intention—

"I have reached a point in my life when I prefer to run a risk. But, after all, from my position on *The Lancashire Gazette* I am not quite prospectless; and Mr. Suffield has given me encouragement."

"Uncle George," said Isabel, "is always so good."

"He is absolutely the best man I know," said Ainsworth.

And thus the conversation came to an end with the recurrence of their duties as stewards; so that it seemed all the more to Ainsworth like an interlude of heavenly music in the commonplace jangle and dull jar of average daily duty. The second relay of feasters had taken the places of the first while our pair were talking, and now they were completely settled and eager for the good things of the Suffield dispensation to be set before them. The second turn at the tables passed like the first, and then the feasters rose and went forth to play. When they were gone Ainsworth, finding himself at length hungry, proffered a request to Miss Raynor, near whom he still maintained himself.

"Do you think," said he, "that I might have something to eat? I've had no lunch."

"Certainly," said she at once; "I suppose aunt must have thought you had lunch in town. We had luncheon early and quick to be ready for this."

She ran off to her aunt, and presently returned, saying that she was deputed to attend to his wants.

That would be scarcely worth chronicling were it not that "the green-eyed monster" was looking forth from young George Suffield's countenance, with consequences that shall duly appear. All the while Ainsworth and Isabel had conversed George had observed them, and thought with a pang that they seemed very friendly and pleased with each other; and now that they went together to a side-table, while all were fast withdrawing from the marquee, and sat down—Ainsworth to eat and drink, and both to talk—the green-eyed monster's wasting heart beat in George's bosom in place of the young man's own honest organ. He could hear before he also withdrew that they were only talking of things literary and dramatic; but still they appeared to him more friendly and better pleased with each other than was necessary.

Something less than half an hour later Ainsworth was passing alone from the marquee to where the Whitsuntide revellers were romping and playing, when he was suddenly reminded of the purpose with which he had entered Holdsworth Park. Amid the new

emotions and events of the past hour or two he had forgotten the existence of the black man, till now he saw him again pass blandly across his vision. He also was moving towards the crowd of holiday-makers; but he halted a little way off and stood with his black hands behind him, smiling and nodding indulgently, like a comment and a query of the ancient and mysterious East concerning the youthful, rude, and noisy West. Ainsworth passed him quickly by, and thinking of what Isabel had told him of George's approaching investiture with supreme authority at the mills, to George Suffield he immediately went. He was somewhat puzzled with his reception. George was commonly very cordial with him: he was now cold; he was commonly frank and talkative: he was now silent and suspicious. But Ainsworth set his changed behavior down to the account of the scene in the conservatory, and forgave him.

"Do you know," he asked, "that black man standing over there?"

"Yes, of course," answered George; "he's my uncle's servant."

"Oh, then," said Ainsworth, "perhaps you know of his having been in one of your mills—the special one against the dam—an hour or two ago?"

"Been where?" asked George, at length giving his real attention.

Then Ainsworth related what he had seen, and George, without remark and without hesitation, called Daniel, who came at once to the summons.

"Where were you two hours ago, Trichy?" asked George.

"Sahib George," began Daniel, with a careless sidelong regard upon Ainsworth from his fine orbs, "it is troublesome to remember all and many things; but the same time I must say that I have been taking myself for much interval for agreeable walks in the respected places of interest—in the valley with the waters and the animals with long black legs, etcetera."

"Have you been in the mill by the lake—on the brink of the dam?"

"Where is the mill? Where is the lake? Where is the—*what?*" asked Daniel, with a smile—a smile of ingenious Eastern subtlety. "I am regret to say that an Englishman says 'damn' to turn away his feeling, but I am not sufficient to understand the meaning of the other. What is 'dam' now?"

"Have you been in any of the mill-buildings in the valley?" asked George, weakly.

"With regard may I say—is it able to enter myself in any of your English buildings when they are closed without the key? So just may I ask where can I be?"

"Answer me, 'yes' or 'no,'" persisted George; "have you been in any of the buildings? Yes or no?"

"No, Sahib George," answered Daniel, directly enough, and with the fullest, steadiest eye imaginable.

"There, you hear," said George to Ainsworth—adding, with a bitter kind of enjoyment that surprised himself, I have no doubt: "Don't you think you might have been mistaken? People are so often mistaken in what they fancy they have heard and understood; and if the ears should deceive you so much, why should not the eyes?"

"I don't think," said Ainsworth, the more obstinately because of the singular tone of young Suffield's observation, "that I can have been mistaken. I saw him as plainly as I see you."

By that the eager conclave had naturally attracted attention, and seemed likely to attract an audience also.

"Anything the matter?" asked the elder Suffield, approaching, with Uncle Harry, the Sahib Raynor.

"Only that Mr. Ainsworth," said George, lightly, "thinks he saw Trichy in the new mill."

"But how could Trichy get in there?" asked Suffield.

"Ah, how!" echoed George, in a semi-scoffing tone which nettled Ainsworth.

"Of course," said he, "it does not matter to me, but I thought it of consequence to you, Mr. Suffield; and I am completely certain I saw this—er—black—I—mean, dark—gentleman in the new mill."

"This is serious," said Suffield; "this must be inquired into. What do you think, Harry?"

But before Uncle Harry could reply George had again spoken, out of an absurd desire to oppose by any means, or to mitigate or make of no account, anything that Ainsworth might say.

"If the thing has been done, father," said he, "no inquiry can undo it. If the steed has been stolen, no inquiry into the question of whether the thief entered or not can bring the steed back. If Daniel Trichinopoly has been in that mill, then I suggest that the only remedy is to swear Daniel Trichinopoly into our service—to do his duty faithfully, and to reveal no secrets of our business or of our manufacture."

"Ah," said Suffield, "that sounds not a bad idea. What do you think, Harry?"

"Oh," said Uncle Harry, "Daniel will swear." Then he asked Daniel, in the man's native Tamil, if he would like to enter the Suffield service; to which Daniel replied, in the same tongue, that he would, and that he would be faithful as the ass that treadeth out the corn. ("The seed," said he, "of the banyan is small, but the tree gives a great shade.") "He says he is willing and glad to enter your service, George. Take him, by all means—with my blessing. Take him, and swear him in by any oath you like; they're all alike to him. And," continued the traveller to Daniel, "come to me to-night, and we'll settle our accounts."

"The sahib," said Daniel, in his Tamil, bowing with his hands crossed upon his breast, "is wise, and comprehends. Having set out to run, is it well to be behind one who wishes to rest by the way? Moreover, as the sahib knows, life without action is like a curry without *seerakam*."

"It is well," said Mr. Raynor, also in Tamil. "See that you maintain the hand of the diligent and the heart of the honest, or you will be as the hare that of its own accord ran into the cook-room."

Having so said, he turned aside to receive a telegram brought by a servant; and thus on the prompting of a moment of pique and whim, without any reflection, was the dusky and mysterious Daniel enlisted in the service of the great House of Suffield.

Uncle Harry handed the telegram to his brother-in-law; it was an intimation from the Royal Geographical Society that Mr. Raynor's promised lecture on his travels had been set down for an early date, and that his presence was desired to make the necessary arrangements as soon as possible.

"I shall go and pack at once," said Uncle Harry, "and catch the evening mail. Come, Daniel."

"You can surely wait till to-morrow, Harry," said Suffield. "I wanted you to make properly the acquaintance of my friend Ainsworth here—have a good talk with him, you know, and so on. And I was looking forward to a nice party at dinner."

"I hope," said Mr. Raynor, turning frankly to Ainsworth, "to have abundant opportunity to enjoy Mr. Ainsworth's company in London. And you know, George, I always like to carry out an intention while it's hot."

"Ah, well," said Suffield, "if you must, you must. I know you're as ill to hold as a towing horse."

"And in any case, Mr. Suffield," said Ainsworth, "I couldn't stay to dinner, as you have been kindly suggesting. I must get back to the office to my work."

"Well, now," said Suffield, "this is what I call a miserably docked tail of a Whitsuntide festival."

Ainsworth was a little sore about young George's behavior towards him, and presently he said his adieux and departed to the station—not without hope of meeting Miss Raynor as he crossed the park. But though he lingered and walked as wide as he dared, he saw nothing of her, and he returned to town in a somewhat despondent and lonely mood, but still resolved to sever his connection with *The Lancashire Gazette* at once.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT CAME OF A LECTURE AT THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL

A WEEK later all the Suffield family except George were established in Rutland Gate. They had hurried up to London to attend Uncle Harry's meeting with the Royal Geographical Society. That took place in the rooms of the society on the evening of the day they arrived, and all three were present, agog to listen to their relative's account of his latest travels. And Miss Raynor was also among them; she had been in London attending to her school duties for two or three days already.

"George would have enjoyed this," said Suffield, looking round upon the more or less distinguished company of ladies and gentlemen. "It's a pity he couldn't be spared from the works for a day; but he couldn't, you know, at the present time. I say he couldn't be spared," he repeated, half aside to Isabel.

"No, uncle," said Isabel, feeling compelled to say something to that direct appeal, "I suppose he couldn't."

"If Mr. Ainsworth is in London," said Mrs. Suffield, giving a glance at her niece, "he might have come to-night."

"Has he come to London yet?" asked Isabel, without attempting to conceal her interest.

"No," answered Suffield; "not yet. He wrote to me a day or two ago that he would not be up for a week or so. But here's your uncle going to begin."

Since this is not a geographical treatise, nor a record of the proceedings in Old Burlington Street, but only a story concerning a few people in whom we are deeply interested, mention is made here of Mr. Raynor's address to the Royal Geographical Society only because of one particular and, it may seem, obscure result of its delivery. It marked an auspicious change in the relations between Isabel and her uncle, and by that token it was the determining point of her history. I must not, however, be supposed to mean that Isabel was in any wise more conscious that she had taken a new departure than is the moorland rill when its course

is deflected by a stone, and it thenceforth flows in another direction than that in which it had set out; I merely use the historian's privilege of laying the finger on some small fact which might be impatiently skipped as of no consequence, and saying, "Note this: it is a point (or an angle) of event or opportunity."

Isabel listened to her uncle's adventures in the Shan States with unwavering attention. Everything he said was of supreme interest to her: first, because she was of the rare kind of young lady that with a romantic imagination has an omnivorous appetite for facts; and, second, because her uncle had been, like Cæsar, "a great part" of all he related. Moreover, she had a tolerably clear idea of the whereabouts of the Shan States and of their characteristic features, which, it may be cheerfully granted, most of the guests of the Royal Geographers had not. Was it not natural, therefore, that Mr. Raynor, casting his shrewd eye round as his discourse progressed, and remarking the politely veiled looseness of attention and dulness of understanding of rows of well-dressed people, and even the wandering gaze and the ill-suppressed yawn of those of his own household, should fix his eye with satisfaction and pleasure on the intelligent and unweariedly attentive face of his brother's daughter? The wall of dislike and suspicion which he had built between his niece and himself had already begun to crumble under various influences. The grievance against his brother which he had nursed and kept warm in his foreign solitude had been discouraged and refused attention by his kindly brother-in-law, and he had asked himself (on Suffield's suggestion), "Was it, after all, fair that the girl should be held in cold disgrace because of the wrong done by her parents?" Moreover, he was fain to confess to himself, after his few days' close observation of Isabel in Lancashire, that he had been mistaken in thinking her pragmatistical, conceited, and ambitious; and since he had come to London he had recalled in the loneliness of his hotel the unconscious, pathetic, gentle inquiry he had now and again seen in her eye—"What have I done that my father's brother should treat me so coldly?"—and he had felt ashamed of himself. Now, on this Royal Geographical evening, Isabel finally conquered, and won her uncle's regard much as Desdemona won Othello's love, by her simple, engrossed attention to his tale of adventure, peril, and discovery. And just in such degree as Uncle Harry had been crabbed, reserved, and suspicious hitherto, he became open, generous, and trusting.

All five rode to Rutland Gate together from Old Burlington Street in the roomy Suffield carriage, and Uncle Harry chaffed his sister and his brother-in-law in remote terms for their inattention to his discourse. He suggested that, being now established in an earl's house, they felt justified in being supercilious; that they had eaten a dinner of aristocratic length and *bourgeois* substance; that the air of the lecture-room had been soporific, and the dresses of the ladies distracting, and so forth.

"Well, you see, Harry," said Suffield, "you struck a note above my understanding rather. I don't know much about geography, and for all I know your Shan States may be next door to Timbuctoo."

"Ah, but George," said Harry, "you'd have wanted to know where they were and all about them if you had heard that they grew cotton or wanted calico."

"I should that, lad," answered Suffield; "I should, I confess."

"You see, Harry," said Mrs. Suffield, "George and I are both getting too old to care for knowledge for its own sake."

"That's just it," said Suffield. "But here's a young lady"—leaning forward and laying his hand on Isabel's—"that's a regular cormorant for knowledge. Now, *she* listened to you. Didn't you see it? You should be satisfied, I think, if nobody else had heard a word you said."

"I saw it," answered Uncle Harry, promptly and warmly, but with a touch of shyness, "and was more than satisfied: I was flattered."

"Oh, Uncle Harry!" exclaimed Isabel; she was too surprised and delighted to say more then.

"I believe," said Aunt Joanna, "if Uncle Harry were the Royal Geographical Society he would give you a gold medal, Isabel, for your attention."

"I would, certainly," asseverated Uncle Harry.

"I have had some school prizes in my time," laughed Isabel, "and I suppose I worked for them; but a gold medal would be the most remarkable and the least deserved of them all. I listened to uncle's lecture because I was interested."

"You are fond of travel, are you?" asked her uncle.

"I don't know," she answered, "because I never have travelled. But I am fond of books of travel—"

"What books are you *not* fond of, Bel?" asked Euphemia, from her corner.

"—and I have to teach geography, you know," continued Isabel.

"Ah, of course she has!" said Suffield. "So it's not so much a case of knowledge for its own sake, after all."

"But I don't suppose, Uncle George," said she, "I shall ever be able to use all I've learned about the Shan States from Uncle Harry—though there was one thing I didn't quite understand."

"And what was that, my dear?" asked Uncle Harry, all agog to explain.

Talking thus they reached Rutland Gate, and sat down to a morsel of supper; and still Isabel and her uncle (her new-found uncle, it seemed to her) talked; and then they all went to bed very tired but very happy—none better pleased at the turn things had taken than the excellent Suffield.

Next morning Isabel had to be off betimes to attend to her duties at the Ladies' College. When she returned, weary, to her lodgings in the Marylebone Road late in the afternoon, she had an agreeable surprise. On the mantel-piece of her little sitting-room there awaited her a letter. She did not recognize the handwriting on the envelope, but on opening it she found a bank-note for £20 and a note from her Uncle Harry.

"My dear niece," he wrote, "I am sending you your gold medal in a handy, transmutable form. You can buy a frock or something with it. I should like to come and drink a cup of tea and have a long talk with you, if I may, to-morrow afternoon.—Your loving uncle, Harry Raynor."

Isabel sat down for an instant to endure the happiness that filled her. She was one of those bright, well-constituted souls that delight to believe all people—especially their kindred and those they most associate with—are more or less good. It had pained her to have to think hardly and grudgingly of her uncle, and now that she could think well of him she rejoiced all the more because she had formerly thought ill. She did not lay the change in his behavior to the account of any merit of her own; she did not even stay to remark that he had changed; she only took blame to herself that she had until now mistaken him.

"How good, how kind of him!" she said to herself, glancing again at his note; and she was not thinking of the money he had sent (part of which she had already mentally set aside for her father), but of the disposition that had prompted the gift and the accompanying affectionate expressions.

She at once drew up to the table and wrote a little letter of thanks and of invitation: she would expect, she said, to see her uncle at five o'clock the following afternoon.

And at five o'clock the following afternoon he came. He pressed her hand affectionately, and then he fidgeted about her little sitting-room for some time, peeping into the books on her side-table, reading the backs of the volumes in her book-case, and looking at the prints on the walls.

"Pretty comfortable here, eh?" he asked.

"It suits me very well, uncle," she answered—"as well, that is," she continued, with a laugh, "as my landlady will permit. The tear of reproach is constantly trembling in her eye; she thinks it so improper, poor dear soul, in a young lady—not a young woman; she makes the distinction—to live alone! I have literally had to wring a latch-key out of her. And whenever I come home late I find her sitting up for me; and she says 'good-night' with such a sigh of relief that I am tempted to pass upstairs whistling and banging my door like a man. Poor woman! I am on her conscience, I know; and she tries to get me to believe that I am always trembling on the verge of disgrace or ruin. But it's handy here for the college, and it's cheap."

"Hum. Yes," murmured her uncle. Then suddenly turning to her and taking her hand, he said, "My dear, I have an apology to make. Down at your Uncle Suffield's place you no doubt thought me very cold and distant to you." Isabel blushed and said nothing, though she looked him frankly in the face; she could not deny that she had thought something of the kind. "Of course you did," he went on; "and I was, I know. I haven't much excuse, but such as it is I give it. You reminded me very much of a woman—a girl—that once—years ago—treated me badly—at least, worse than I deserved. That's all. The impression has worn off; I see you are not like her in the least. So let us be friends and say no more about it;" and again he warmly pressed her hand.

Isabel returned his pressure, saying, "I am not sorry you have told me that, uncle; though I *am* sorry you have told it me as an apology. Every one has a right to form an opinion of another."

"Even a wrong one?" queried her uncle.

"Even a wrong one, surely, uncle," said she, "if it be formed on what appear sufficient grounds."

"Ah, that's just it," said her uncle.

She made no other allusion to that past of his of which his words had given her a hint; but henceforward it invested him in her eyes with a new sentimental interest in which the strongest-minded woman likes to indulge.

And then they sat down to tea and became very friendly. They talked freely, and almost without pause, of many things, Isabel perceiving that she pleased her uncle both with her opinions and her expression of them, and resuming, therefore, more and more of her bright, fresh self. As they thus talked he suddenly posed her with a question: "What would you do if you had a great deal of money?"

"What would you call 'a great deal?'" she asked, thinking of her salary, the £20 she had just received, and her father.

"Well, not so much as your Uncle George has tied up in his mills," answered he, "but enough, say, to bring a yearly income of about three thousand pounds. Would *you* call that 'a great deal,' or not?"

"I would," said Isabel, with her eye not really on herself, but on her uncle. "And if I had so much, the first thing I should do, I believe, would be to make myself very comfortable, especially if my life hitherto had been rather hard, and busy, and bare. If I had a taste for books, I should buy books—beautiful books, and rare books; and if I had a taste for pictures, I should surround myself with fine pictures—not very expensive pictures, necessarily, by famous artists, but pictures that pleased me whether they were by popular painters or not; and so on with furniture, and china, and carpets, and beautiful things of all kinds. And then if I liked good dinners, I should have them."

"Dinners, too!" laughed her uncle. "My dear, you will permit me to say that your tastes appear masculine."

"Well," she answered, "is it not of a man I am thinking?"

"I see," he cried. "You are thinking of me! But I wished you to think of yourself: I want to know what you would do with so much money."

"Truly, uncle," she answered, after a moment's consideration, "if you want a serious answer—I don't know. I should feel it a great, an anxious, responsibility. And, since I haven't so much money, nor am ever likely to have"—had she then been looking at her uncle she might have caught a suspicious twinkle from his eye—"why should I bother to inquire of myself what I should do with it?"

"But," he urged, "wouldn't you see that all your own people wanted for nothing that they needed or would like?"

"Of course," she answered; "but that goes as much without saying as that I should have my own breakfast and dinner, and buy clothes for myself. One's own people ought, I think, to come before all others."

"Quite so," said her uncle. "Well, now, your aunt told me to bring you along to dinner to-night, if you could spare the time; so, if you don't object, we'll walk to Rutland Gate and talk this matter out by the way. You like walking, I hope?" he asked, seeing something like hesitation on her face.

"Oh yes, uncle," she answered; "I like walking, and I'll go with you. But will you let me write a note first? It will only take me two or three minutes."

This was the business she had turned her thought on: she had promised when in Lancashire to communicate again with her father (or with the person who represented himself as such) as soon as she returned to London; she had been back several days, but she had been able to do nothing for want of money; now, however, that she had money in abundance, she would let no more days slip by without communicating. She therefore sat down at her side-table and wrote a hasty note to the following effect: "If you will call at your tobacconist's to-morrow evening about the time of the last post, you will receive something from me." She was determined to know whether this man who wrote to her was her father or not, and her plan was, not to send money in the letter she promised, but to be in the tobacconist's shop with sufficient money in her hand at the time she named, and to speak to the person who inquired for her letter; if that person could satisfy her he was her father, she knew what she would do; if he could not, she still knew what she would do.

Her note she took out in her hand and posted as she passed along with her uncle. But that very night she had a singular and significant adventure which somewhat modified her expectation of her father.

CHAPTER X

"THE ONLY WOMAN IN THE WORLD"

WHEN about ten o'clock that night the great front door of the house in Rutland Gate was swung open by the attendant footman to permit Miss Raynor to pass out, it was discovered that the weather was wet. It had been a cold day for June, with the wind from the northeast, and now the wind had shifted into the southeast, bringing a little warmer air laden with fine rain. Seeing that, Mr. Raynor, who had accompanied his niece to the door (her other uncle was already become sedulous in the House of Commons), wished to send her to her lodgings in a cab, which the attendant footman professed a desire to call; but Miss Raynor insisted on going home on foot.

"I prefer to walk," said she, "and by myself, thank you, uncle. I shall not get wet; I am shamelessly protected from the rain with both umbrella and mackintosh."

So she had her way, and the door closed behind her. She had something of her Uncle Suffield's habit of quoting to herself scraps from her reading—scraps which sounded more or less applicable to the occasion. As she departed from the house, holding her skirts as free of her heels as possible, she quoted, with a low laugh to herself:

"Go, call a coach; and let a coach be called;
And let the man that calleth be the caller."

"Cab, miss," said the driver of a loitering hansom, as she crossed to enter the Park by the Prince of Wales's gate.

"No, thank you," she cheerfully replied; and the cabman drew up his horse to see her disappear into the comparative darkness of the Park, and said to a comrade who had loitered up with another cab: "P'raps she can afford a keb, and p'raps she can't. P'raps she's a lady, and p'raps she ain't nobody in particular. Anyhow she's a fine young woman, and she 'adn't ought to be a-walkin' in the Park all alone by herself. 'Swelp me! If I 'adn't my keb I'd offer to escorch her myself."

Isabel had quick ears. She overheard, but she was only amused ; and she held on her way to the right. Her nearest route—and despite the dark and wet she saw no reason for diverging from it—was round the eastern end of the Serpentine, and thence direct to the Marble Arch. She had passed the Serpentine—thinking how like an enchanted lake it looked in that half-light that hung over London, and with the soft and velvety blackness of the trees that begirt it—and was stepping briskly along the narrow path that led to the great archway, when a poor, meagre creature shuffling by suddenly snatched her umbrella from her easy hand and fled over the grass.

"The scoundrel !" exclaimed a man, who almost as suddenly appeared before her and dashed after the thief. In a few seconds he was up with him, had caught him, and was leading him back to Isabel, himself carrying the recovered umbrella. The victorious stranger had led his captive but a few paces when he wrenched himself free and again fled over the grass. The stranger hesitated an instant whether he should again pursue him, but Isabel called, "Please let him go !" and he returned, carefully carrying the closed umbrella as if it were of the most precious and fragile nature.

"Madam, permit me," he said in a rich, genteel voice, which, though somewhat shaken and husky, had the exactitude and modulation of an elocutionist's. He put up the umbrella and handed it to her with a bow of great propriety.

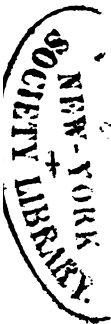
In the dim light she could only see that the polite stranger had a very red and rather puffy face, that his ungloved hand trembled a good deal, and that his spare figure was closely buttoned in a frock-coat against the weather.

"Thank you very much," said she, "for your bravery and your kindness."

"Madam," said he, with solemn deliberation, "I can never bear to see a lady in distress."

"Oh, but I was not at all in distress, thank you," said she. "If any one is in distress it must be that poor man, and he has lost his plunder, after all."

"He may have been a deserving man," said he ; "but I need not remind you that appearances are frequently deceitful, madam. Meanwhile, may I accompany you to the broader, better-lighted, and more frequented thoroughfare ; it is not wise—if you will permit me to say so—in a lady to perambulate these unfrequented paths alone."



The man was polite and seemed harmless, and she thought it would be sheer rudeness to refuse his request, especially since the broader thoroughfare was but a few yards off; so she assented by turning off in that direction. Walking by her side, he seemed to halt a little and to lean hard upon his cane.

"I hope," said she, "you have not hurt yourself in running after that man?"

"No, madam," he answered; "it is only a touch of rheumatism that occasionally supervenes in such weather as the present. I have travelled the round earth over, and have passed through numerous hardships, but I never knew what rheumatism was until a year or two ago when I was camping out in the wilds of America."

"The round earth over." Where had she heard that phrase? It sounded as if it had once been spoken in her ear. And the man's voice, with its cadences and its superfluous fluency: did not that also sound familiar? But the frequented thoroughfare was now reached, and she stopped and signified that there they must part.

"I am exceedingly obliged to you," said she, tempted a little to imitate his grandiloquence, "for your polite attentions;" and she bowed, and was passing on.

"Madam," said he, "grant me a moment."

"Yes," said she.

"You are well protected against the weather, madam," said he with a bow, doffing his hat (and then she saw he was partially bald, and that he had a mustache as fiercely and inconsequently bristling and over it a nose as fiery as Bardolph's own, while his dark eyes shone with a wandering but not unkindly light).

"Yes, I am," said she.

"You perceive I am not;" and he showed the thin and frayed skirt of his frock-coat.

"I am sorry," said she, "that you are likely to spoil my opinion of you."

"You cannot, madam," said he, "be sorrier than I. But I conceive you are generous and sympathetic, and by no means prudish."

"Well, what then? What do you wish of me?"

"Between ourselves, madam, I should like to achieve some refreshment. A bottle of Burgundy is excellent, but failing that, a glass of Scotch whisky—with water—is not to be despised."

Isabel found her pocket and her purse, and gave him a shilling.

"Madam," said he, accepting it and again doffing his hat, "you are the only woman in the world."

"Thank you, sir," said she, and turned and passed on her way.

She was pained and humiliated more than she could have believed possible. Could an educated gentleman really descend to so low and shameless a condition as that? And through what? Suddenly—she knew not at the moment quite why—she thought of her father. Considering all she had heard and guessed, was it within the range of possibility that he could become such a poor creature as that she had parted from? The phrase, "the round earth over," still rung in her ear, and the turn of the man's voice, and she remembered what they reminded her of—her father's last letter, or, at least, the last letter of the man who represented himself as her father. She was struck stock-still an instant, and then she ran back to where she had left the man, and still on, but she did not find him. She returned, and passed out of the Park and home to her lodgings by Portman Square and Baker Street, with her thought cast forward to the meeting she had arranged for the following evening: would she then see the man she had encountered that night, or another?

She sat down to read to allay such thoughts, and she accomplished her end; but when she at length went to bed very late, and with her brain made wakeful by the effort of her reading, her ugly and anxious thoughts returned upon her with redoubled force. If her father were really such a one as that man, or perhaps that very one, what should she do? She asked herself, "What if she found he was that very man?" And she was appalled and ashamed to think that no affection would spring in her heart towards him, and that she would rather he were dead. But her father might not be like the man she had met, or at least not so wretched a creature as he, and then—then she prayed God that she might learn what duty and love would teach. When at length she dropped asleep she conversed with men with Bardolphian countenances, who all somehow were her uncles, and after a period of tangled discussion with them, and uncertainty about the color of their eyes, she would start awake and again think of her father.

Next day passed with her usual duties, and in the evening, after she had gone through and marked a pile of her pupils' exercises (she had been asked to go again to Rutland Gate, but she had excused herself), she set out to find Mrs. Ackland Snow's, Tobacco-nist, near the New North Road. She had discovered that the last

delivery of letters in that region, as in her own, began about nine o'clock, and by that hour she intended to be at the door of Mrs. Ackland Snow. She had already looked at her map of London, and now she took the train to King's Cross, whence she rode by omnibus to her destination. It was scarcely dark, and she found without difficulty Norfolk Street. It was a quiet street, of which she was glad, and it contained only such two or three storied houses as are peculiar to certain quarters of London, and as appear always striving, but without conspicuous success, to look genteel. Such houses are commonly found to be let in tenements and to swarm with children—the one possession in which the poor are rich. The aspect of the houses, however, cheered Isabel's heart a little, for she thought whoever lived there could not be absolutely sunk to the lowest ebb. She found the shop of "Ackland Snow, Tobacconist," but she did not enter at once; she walked slowly up and down on the other side of the way, waiting for the postman to appear; while boys and girls loitering along the pavement with the supper beer wondered why a veiled lady, tall and grand-looking as a duchess, should be "hanging about" their street. Isabel was beginning to find such notice somewhat embarrassing, when her attention was fixed by the approach of the postman. After a rat-tat here and there he went to "Ackland Snow's." A bell tinkled as he opened the door, which plainly signified that little business was done, and that there was not always a person in attendance in the shop. Isabel crossed the street to enter, but she was no earlier than a man who hurried along the pavement with the aid of a stick, and whom, with some amazement but no difficulty, she recognized as the man she had met the evening before. Seeing him, she drew back a little and let him enter first. She therefore neither hindered his question nor was too late to catch it.

"Has that letter come for us to-night, Mrs. Snow?" he asked.

Mrs. Snow, a stout and comfortable-seeming person, handed him a letter without a word, and at the same moment Isabel stepped forward and put up her veil. The man looked, and his jaw dropped. He turned, took off his hat, set it on the counter, and sat down in a chair with gloomy and tragic resignation.

"Mrs. Snow," said he, frowning and pursing his lips, "I believe I have got them again."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" said Mrs. Snow, in a soothing tone. "Don't say that, Mr. Doughty!"

"It grieves me to say it, Mrs. Snow," said he, folding his arms, "but I believe I have."

"Please, Mr. Doughty, then," said Mrs. Snow, "like a good man, which you are, don't go and 'ave 'em 'ere."

"Is your name 'Doughty?'" asked Isabel; having heard the name twice, she was now pretty certain of its sound.

"She speaks!" he muttered, aside, unfolding his arms and relaxing somewhat the ferocity of his aspect. "It is—it must be—she!" And he slowly turned his eyes on her and rose. "Madam," said he, "I am the miserable individual baptismally named Alexander Doughty, at your service."

"Let me ask you, then, Mr. Doughty," said Isabel, "how it is I find you receiving a letter addressed to Mr. Raynor?" and she pointed to the letter lying face upward on the counter.

"Mr. Raynor is his friend, ma'am," said Mrs. Snow, "as he fetches and carries for, and as he has been that kind to nobody knows!"

"A truce to compliments, Mrs. Snow!" said Mr. Doughty. "You are trenching on my private affairs. You should not do it, Mrs. Snow; you must not." Then turning to Isabel, he said: "I am a journalist, madam, and Mr. Raynor is my chief."

"I wish to see Mr. Raynor," said Isabel. "Will you take me to him?"

"Your desire to see the chief, madam," said Mr. Doughty, "is natural, and even laudable; but—" And Mr. Doughty for once seemed at a loss for a word.

"You wonder," said Isabel, "why I should wish to see him. That letter to him is from me—I am Isabel Raynor."

"Land of Goshen!" exclaimed Doughty. "The only woman in the world is Miss Raynor, and I never guessed it! Let us withdraw, Miss Raynor, and speak of this. I perceive an explanation is due to you." Then as he approached the door he turned and said to her, in a low voice: "I must tell you he does not know of this. Good-night, Mrs. Snow," he said aloud, as he held the door open.

Isabel passed out, and he followed her, buttoning up his frock-coat.

CHAPTER XI

MR. DOUGHTY EXPLAINS

"WHICH way?" asked Isabel, when both she and Mr. Alexander Doughty were on the pavement.

"Let us," said Mr. Doughty, turning his back on the New North Road, "walk in this direction, Miss Raynor;" and he was politely careful to take the outer side of the pavement. "This," he continued, "will be quieter for our purpose."

"But," asked Isabel, stopping short, "is it not in this direction that you live?"

"It is," said Mr. Doughty, with solemn emphasis. "But you shall hear, if you will permit me to explain;" and they went on again. "Your father and myself had rooms some time ago in the house of Mrs. Ackland Snow. She is an excellent woman, but rather fidgety; her fidgets and the odor of her Irish twist, brown shag, and penny Pickwicks were too much for your father's shattered nerves. It is possible that you do not know that your father's nerves *are* shattered; they are not shattered in exactly the way mine are, but they are *shattered*."

"Will you be so good, Mr. Doughty," said Isabel, "as to explain to me, as you promised, the character of your connection with my father?"

She said that somewhat curtly, and then felt a little ashamed of her curtness, for the forces of attraction and repulsion were striving within her. She was drawn to think kindly and gratefully of Mr. Doughty, because (she had understood from Mrs. Snow's words) he had been a faithful friend to her father; and yet when she looked at the shaking Bardolphian creature beside her and thought of his abject behavior of the evening before, she suspected that he might have had to do with her father's declension, and dislike and disgust swayed her for the moment.

"Your father and myself, Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, "are bound together in a friendship of considerable standing. A good many years ago—indeed, I may say, when you were an infant in your mother's arms—I was your father's sub."

"His what?"

"His 'sub'; which is, I may explain, an abbreviation used among men of the press for subeditor. I was his sub," he repeated, as if he enjoyed the word, "on *The Weekly Bulletin*, and we worked together with the extremest harmony; and the harmony arose, I may say, from kindness on his side and good-will on my own. I admired your father, Miss Raynor. He was a man—and he is," said he, half aside, and as if to some one who was likely to deny it—"of brilliant abilities, all of which were squandered in editorial and journalistic drudgery for an unenlightened public. I wrote, if you will permit me to say so, with a pen dipped in common ink—"

"And whiskey," thought Isabel, but she refrained from hurting Mr. Doughty's feelings by saying it.

"—he," continued Mr. Doughty, "wrote with a pen steeped in finer fluid. Moreover, he was the best company in the world—at least, in the whole range of Fleet Street; and, for that matter, he is still; yes, he is still—occasionally."

"You mean, I suppose," said Isabel, bitterly, "when he is in a condition in which I would not like to see him?"

"Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, weightily, and he stopped to add emphasis to his words, "you are under a grave misapprehension. If my meaning had been as you have conceived it, I should not have alluded to the matter in conversation with a lady." And Mr. Doughty walked on again. "No," he continued; "the meaning you suggested would apply, perchance, to the miserable individual now walking by your side, but it would *not* apply to the chief. I may be—I believe I am—good company only when I have achieved some refreshment; for instance, I am not myself to-night, I beg to assure you—but it is not so with the chief. We both have our foibles, our weaknesses, our vices, if you will," he added, in a ferocity of criticism of 'self and friend,' "but, as I ventured to observe a moment ago, they are not alike: I have mine; the chief has his."

Up to that point Isabel had held herself in; she had hoped that by patiently listening to Mr. Alexander Doughty she would arrive quickly at an understanding of the relations between him and her father, and of the condition in which her father was living; but now, between impatience with his sonorous maunderings and a strange acute feeling of jealousy that this man (whom she could not but despise, strive as she might after a better feeling for him)

—that this man knew all about her father and thought it necessary to defend him against the misunderstandings of his ignorant daughter, she let herself go.

"It is a strange, an unnatural thing," she broke forth, "that I should be gathering all the knowledge I have of my father from a —a person whom I have met in the most casual way!"

"And that, you would say, Miss Raynor," interrupted Mr. Doughty, "not under the most favorable circumstances."

"Certainly," said she—for she could not spare him now—"not under the most favorable circumstances. But that I have been ignorant of my father, or of his condition, is not my fault. It is his own—or yours, who have come between us. When he first wrote to me three years ago, why did he refuse to see me? Was it that you persuaded him to that?"

"I, Miss Raynor?" exclaimed Mr. Doughty, stopping again—this time in the sheerest amazement. "God forbid! You little know, Miss Raynor. You totally misunderstand me;" and his hands began to tremble as he clasped them on the head of his stick. "I would spend my last shilling with your father; I *have* spent it oftener than once! I would give my last drop of blood—such as it is—to serve him! I come between you? I persuade him not to see his own daughter?—and such a daughter! You little know!"

"Forgive me," said she, in an impulse of self-reproach when she saw his distress. "No doubt I have wrongly accused you. But how can I understand if you will not explain? Do not tell me any more about my father's life—he can tell me that himself; but tell me, as you promised, how you come to be receiving letters intended for him, and what you meant by saying he knew nothing of it."

"Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, "bear with me an instant, and I will tell you succinctly. It was I that saw the announcement in the papers of your appointment as mistress in the College for Ladies. I showed it to your father, and begged him, almost on my knees, to make himself known to you; but he refused absolutely to do so, for reasons which he thought sufficient, but which I venture to consider inadequate. Your father's situation was at that particular moment desperate; our uncle—ahem!—well, Miss Raynor, it was desperate beyond anything you can dream of desperation."

"Perhaps," said Isabel, "I can dream more in accordance with reality than you imagine."

"At any rate, Miss Raynor, to understand how I came to do what I am about to relate to you that I did you must know that I had for years been accustomed to act, if I may be allowed the comparison, as jackal to the lion, and that it had become necessary for me to assume the entire control of our joint affairs, your father's and my own, financial and other. I would relate to you how that had become necessary, but you have signified to me that it would not be agreeable."

"Not now, please," said Isabel; "go on merely with your explanation."

"Very good, Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty. "When we were in a tight place—that is to say, when we found ourselves in straitened circumstances—"

"In short, when you were hard up."

"—in short, when we were hard up, it was I who had to find relief from our embarrassment; it devolved upon me to find replenishment for the exchequer."

"Do you mean," asked Isabel, coldly, "in plain words, that you have had to keep my father?"

"Not at all. Do not misunderstand me, I pray. I am not uttering complaint; I am but stating a fact. And I ask you to remember that I said I was jackal to the lion. It therefore fell upon me, when provision for our wants was required, to go the round to find occupation for the refined pen of your father, or, failing that, for my own rude quill."

"And if both of these failed?" asked Isabel, in sure expectation of the answer.

"Then," said Mr. Doughty, "I would try to find temporary accommodation from a friend. Both these resources failed us at the time I spoke of."

"Now I understand completely," said Isabel. "The jackal had one trick—one resource—more than the lion."

"I ventured to suggest to your father—"

"I understand," interrupted Isabel. "You suggested to my father that he should apply to me for help, and he would not hear of it; he said he was not yet fallen so low as to ask his daughter, a girl only beginning life for herself, for such help as his weakness or his wickedness would not allow him to provide for himself. Was not that what he said?" she demanded, eagerly.

"Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, "you are as clever as you are charming. He spoke much to that effect."

"Mr. Doughty," said Isabel, "I shall be obliged to you exceedingly if you will not pay me compliments. You, however, had not the same view as my father, your old chief. You thereupon wrote to me in his name, telling him nothing of it."

"What first made me think of it was that my handwriting was not unlike your father's."

"And you received from me a certain sum of money, which I had sent as to my father."

"And which, Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, "I religiously expended on your father, and on him alone."

"Oh, that is not a point we need discuss. The jackal, I suppose, is worthy of his hire."

"Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, with palpable emotion—he had stopped again and faced her, with his hands clasped on his stick—"you should not say that. It is unworthy of you to stab so cruelly one who has learned to admire your generous qualities, even though that one is the miserable, broken individual before you. You should not—you should not, really." His lip trembled with emotion, and a tear sprang in his eye, which he ferociously flicked away with his finger. "If there is one person in the world whom I care for besides the chief it is yourself, and I expect you to believe me when I say that whenever I have applied to you it has been only on your father's account, and that whatever you have bestowed in answer to my applications has been strictly expended on your father to the uttermost farthing."

"I believe you," said Isabel, impulsively, giving him her hand. "Forgive me."

She was so sorry for the pain she had evidently given the poor creature, and she saw him so touched with a pathetic dignity, that a new revulsion of feeling came upon her, in which she could almost have kissed him to assuage the pain she had caused. But the trembling and spasmodic fervor with which he grasped her proffered hand drove back all such inclination.

"Are we not nearly there yet?" she asked, going on again.

"To tell you the simple truth, Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty, now less constrained and more cheerful, "your father is not in our rooms."

Isabel stopped at once.

"Where is he, then?" she asked.

"At this precise moment he is waiting in a certain house in a lane off the Ratcliff Highway for his bill to be paid."

"Bill?—for what? Not—not for drink?" asked Isabel, with a new horror upon her.

"No, Miss Raynor, not for drink. That is not the form the chief's refreshment takes."

"What is it, then?" demanded Isabel. "Tell me the truth. I hope I am not afraid or ashamed to hear what you may have to say."

"Well, Miss Raynor, in a word, the devil that has tempted him and brought him to his present pass is opium. I have seen its damnable method of working—excuse my strong epithet—from its initial stage. He began to smoke opium from an innocent and laudable motive—nothing less, indeed, than to find 'copy,' to be sold for what it would bring in the magazine market to furnish forth the expenses attendant on your birth. He visited an opium-den of the East End in the days when both opium-dens and the East End, properly so called, were much more dangerous places to enter than they are now. He went then by himself, and some time later he piloted no less a person than Charles Dickens thither. I am declaring to you the simple truth. But he did not make a habit of smoking the seductive drug until your poor mother's death. Then he was distracted, and could find no comfort in anything, and forgetfulness only in his opium-sleep. My dear Miss Raynor, let the rest be silence."

"Mr. Doughty," exclaimed Isabel, without a moment's hesitation, "let us go at once and pay his bill, and get him out of the dreadful place!"

"My dear young lady," said Mr. Doughty, "I should say 'agreed' with the utmost alacrity, were it not that my purse is absolutely empty. To say truth," added he, with an attempt to laugh which sounded rusty and unused, "I had looked forward to a remittance from you to-night to release him."

"Come," said she, hurriedly. "Which way must we go? I have money."

Mr. Doughty set his face towards the New North Road. Isabel swept along the pavement at a pace which somewhat taxed Mr. Doughty's rheumatic limbs to maintain.

"We must take a cab," said he. "And will it not be best for me to go alone? It is a dangerous region for a young lady to venture into, more particularly at this time of night."

"A cab, by all means," said Isabel; "but I shall go with you—I am not afraid."

"It is," said he, "for you to ordain, Miss Raynor, and for me to obey. It must be a four-wheeler, then."

They hurried on in silence till they had passed Mrs. Ackland Snow's again, and were nearing the New North Road.

"He goes off, I suppose," said Isabel, "at intervals to this place, and remains there till you find him and release him?"

"Exactly so," said Mr. Doughty.

"How long has he been gone this time?" asked she.

"Three days," answered he.

"Three days! I should have thought that was enough to kill a man! Dreadful! Dreadful! Let us make haste!"

When they reached the New North Road, Mr. Doughty produced from his waistcoat-pocket a whistle and blew a call, which was speedily answered by the appearance of a four-wheeler. He opened the door, and when Isabel had entered the cab he closed it again.

"But are you not coming?" she asked.

"I am coming, certainly," answered Mr. Doughty. "But my place is with the driver on the box."

"I cannot hear of such a thing," said Isabel. "You will catch cold; you are not wrapped up."

"I am quite sufficiently clothed, thank you, Miss Raynor; and I would prefer, if you will permit me, to sit on the box and smoke a pipe."

Thus it came to pass that Isabel did not hear what instructions were given to the driver; and they drove away, on and on, through regions to her altogether unknown. She remembered, however, that Mr. Doughty had said that the opium-den was near the Rat-cliff Highway, and she was familiar enough with her map of London to know the direction they must take. They passed down the New North Road; and presently they left the bustle and glare behind, and rolled through darkness and comparative silence, with large comfortable-seeming houses on either hand, where in the past had dwelt substantial men from the City, whose descendants or successors have gone farther afield; over the dark and grewsome canal with evil-smelling chemical-works on the one hand, and tall square piles of sweet-smelling wood on the other; on again through the darkness, picked out here and there at wide intervals with tall and despondent gas-lamps, and out again into clamor and bustle, blazing gas in shops and gin-palaces, and flaring naphtha on the stalls; and then out into what was plainly a great

thoroughfare, and past an imposing church, withdrawn deep into the shadow at the junction of two ways, and looking severely and pityingly down on the surging tides of human life, business and pleasure, sin and sorrow, that met about its gates; on, and still on.

During this progress, with the deafening rattle of the wheels and of the slung windows in her ears, Isabel passed into a semi-conscious state. She knew she was wearing farther and farther east; she saw how different were the scenes she was passing through from those to which she was accustomed in the neighborhood of her lodgings, a good many miles behind her; and she wondered anew at the vast, the mysterious London in which she dwelt. She was a tolerably learned young lady, and she was able to compare in her mind the great capitals of the world—to compare, at least, what she had read of those in the past with what she knew of this in the present; and she said to herself that, though Rome was great, and Babylon was great, and Nineveh, and Thebes, yet London was greater far by reason, not of its fine buildings and a general impression of magnificence and imposing outward show, but of its vastness and its swarm of men and women, each in an orderly way doing that which is right in his own eyes, none daring to make him afraid. The wonder of London, she felt, is its people. Then she went on to think particularly of her father—a weak unit swimming, floating hither and thither in this sea of humanity. Now that she was definitely set out to find him, her anxiety concerning him and her horror of his situation had changed into a kind of gentle romantic expectation. She had read of De Quincey, Coleridge, and other confirmed consumers of opium, and the glamour of these names made her father's fault appear less a vice than an amiable and poetic weakness.

She was rudely awakened out of these dreams by the stoppage of the cab and the appearance of Mr. Doughty at the door. He said it was necessary to descend there and to walk a little way. She descended, and walked along the pavement by his side, not without a tremor or two, for dark, foreign, and wild-looking men (browed and baked with wind and sun) stared curiously at her as she passed. They came to the corner of a dark and noisome alley, which they were about to turn down when they were accosted by a policeman. He looked hard at Mr. Doughty.

"Oh," said he, "it's you, is it, sir? Your chief down there again, I suppose. Is the lady going down with you?"

"Yes, policeman," said Mr. Doughty, in his profoundest tones, "the lady thinks it necessary to go with me; she thinks it absolutely necessary."

"In that case, ma'am, or miss," said the policeman, "I must go down with you—only to see that no harm comes to you, for they're a queer lot down there."

CHAPTER XII

A PRODIGAL FATHER

Down the noisome lane, or alley, Isabel and Mr. Doughty passed in the rear of the policeman. It was so narrow and so dark that they thought it well to keep in the middle of the way; and yet they scarce avoided contact with dingy figures that flitted past them in and out of gaping doorways, and with children that squalled and scrambled in the gutters, for in that dreadful region night and day were confounded even for the youngest. At the end of the alley was a dark little square, and to a tumble-down house at the farther side the policeman led and they followed. The doorway was below the level of the street, and was approached by a flight of half a dozen steps worn very much away by the tread and scuffle of countless feet. Into this den or cave they descended, and now at a suggestion Isabel would have turned back, for these squalid surroundings had dispelled the romance of opium-smoking, and the horrid expectation of what she might see oppressed and terrified her. But neither of her companions said a word, and she went on with them as if without hesitation, on to a door on one side of the dark passage, above which hung a small paraffin lamp, smoking and stinking. The policeman lifted the latch and opened the door, and then stood aside for the others to enter. Isabel drew back.

"I think," said she, "I will wait here."

"I will go in," said Mr. Doughty, "and find him, and discover what there is to pay."

He entered, and Isabel and the policeman remained together by the door. They had a full view of the long, low room, the atmosphere of which was thick with the brown and sickly opium smoke. A heavy silence prevailed, but yet Isabel was instinctively aware that there were many men in the awful place. No lamp illumined the gloom, nothing save a lurid glow proceeding from a raised brazier of charcoal at the farther end, and points of light here and there which were alternately bright and dull, and which when bright made little smoky halos in the dense, smoky atmosphere.

As her eyes became used to the peculiar gloom, she made out wooden bunks ranged above each other against the wall, like the berths of a ship, and in the bunks she dimly descried strange figures disposed fantastically as on beds of languid torture. Now and then she heard murmurs of uncouth speech, which rose heavily from the silence, and slowly sank back into silence again.

Meanwhile Mr. Doughty had made his way down the den. He was met midway by a bowing and gesticulating Chinaman, to whom he seemed to explain his purpose, and with whom he moved towards the brazier. There they stopped, looming large and shadowy against it; and after a moment or two the Chinaman returned alone down the room. Then it seemed to Isabel as if a face sprang out of the darkness around the brazier. Close against it, steeped in the glow of the charcoal, she saw the grizzled head of a man with thin nose and lank, close-shaven jaw; the man sat with his chin in his hands gazing into the fire; but presently he raised his head with his face half turned towards the door to look at Mr. Doughty, who stood on the other side of the brazier; and then Isabel's heart rose and sank, for she was sure she saw her father. At that moment the Chinaman appeared through the haze immediately before her. He bowed and he smiled with an expansive, all-embracing friendliness; but there was an expression in his slanting eyes which made Isabel shudder.

"It is my own fault," she said to herself. "I should not have come here."

The policeman, however, came to her relief.

"Quick, Johnny, quick," said he; and the Chinaman turned away, smiling and bowing still, and moved noiselessly back to the brazier.

In a moment or two Mr. Doughty came back, and said the Chinaman's demand was for so much (naming a sum which seemed extravagant, even for three days' unremitting consumption of his seductive poison), but that, with Miss Raynor's permission, he would give him so much less.

"Give him what he asks for," said Isabel, putting her purse into Mr. Doughty's hand, "and let us get away."

Mr. Doughty's look of mingled surprise and conscious worth at having untold money intrusted to him was good to see.

"I will accomplish," said he, "the business with expedition."

He hurried away, and soon returned, leading by the arm a lean, haggard man, with hair and dress disordered and creased,

pale with the pasty pallor of the Chinaman, loose-lipped, and with every nerve twitching in reaction from the prolonged effect of the drug. He seemed but half conscious, and he walked sadly and shamblingly with his eyes on the ground.

Isabel leaned back, as if she would faint, against the door-post. She experienced such bitter disappointment and piercing of heart as she had never before known. Was this pitiable creature her father, whom she had dreamed of comforting and cheering, and upon whom she had been ready to pour out all her affection? Did he know that his daughter was there, waiting for him—the girl whom he had let slip from care and ken for more than twenty years? Perhaps he did not yet know, or fully comprehend. She found herself thinking it would be well that it should be so. She shrank from embracing, even from touching, him. She was filled with shame for him, and yet she was ashamed of her shame.

In this turbulent state of emotion she scarcely noticed that he was being hurried up the lane, by Mr. Doughty on one side and the policeman on the other, and that she herself was hastening after them, away from that hideous Inferno whose stifling fumes seemed still creeping and writhing about her.

They found the cab waiting for them where they had left it. Mr. Doughty opened the door, and helped his chief to enter. Then he turned to Miss Raynor.

"Miss Raynor," said he, in a low but impressive voice, "you see him at his worst, his very worst; you must not judge of him as you see him now."

"No," said she, stung somewhat with her former jealousy that a stranger should know more of her father than she knew, "I must not—I do not. You have my purse, Mr. Doughty; will you give the policeman something for his kindness?" Then turning to the policeman, she said, "Thank you, very much," and entered the cab, and sat down opposite her father.

Mr. Doughty did as she requested. Then, closing the cab door without a word, he mounted again beside the driver. Isabel felt curiously grateful for so small a matter, and was in some sense cheered by it. She was compelled to see that those delicate turns of behavior which are taken to mark a gentleman were still possible even to so poor and saddened a creature as Mr. Doughty, and she therefore was inclined to be hopeful about her father. Moreover, she considered, and said to herself, "There must, after all, be something good and attractive about him even for poor Mr.

Doughty to have remained an attached and faithful friend these many years." All which is significant evidence of the prostrate condition to which her feelings and hopes had been reduced by the sight of her father.

They had not driven very far—Isabel on one seat, and her father leaning back in the corner of the other—and she was wondering whether he was not asleep, when he suddenly threw himself forward, with his face in his hands and his elbows resting on his knees, and sobbed aloud. Upon that the imprisoned founts of feeling in Isabel's generous breast burst forth, and swept away all doubt and speculation; she became simply a large-hearted woman and a daughter aware that there before her was a man—her father—needing pity and consolation.

"Father!" she cried, and sank on her knees before him. "Don't! don't! I'm here!"

She took one of his hands, which he yielded to her, and she put her arm about him.

"Rise, rise!" he said, in a sharp treble of agony. "It is I should be there!"

She yielded to his insistent hand, and sat beside him.

"Don't speak to me," said he; "let me look at you. You are like your mother—poor mother!—but stronger—much stronger. How does it happen?"

Isabel looked at him, and for the first time met his eye; there was a light in it which belied the haggard debauchery of the countenance, and which at once made her feel that she was not the chief person there. She was relieved and soothed; she was now certain that her father was not a soddened brute; that much and terribly though he might have tried, tortured, and debased his body, his intellect and soul still shone clear through all. He leaned back again, looking at her and dreaming, and she sat content (comparatively), and still held his hand, in spite of its nervous twitching, pleased to find it warm and of a beautiful shape. They said no further word to each other till the cab stopped and Mr. Doughty came to the door. This time it was Isabel that helped her father. He took her arm out of the cab and into the lodging, which was on the ground-floor of one of the houses of Norfolk Street.

Seeing that Mr. Doughty had not followed them in, and hearing voices without for some instants in tolerably loud debate, Isabel (who feared the cabman was in process of being dismissed, and

who, moreover, now felt herself responsible for her father and his friend) went to the door.

"I had intended," she heard Mr. Doughty say in portentous tones to the cabman—"I had intended to bestow upon you a considerable honorarium, but, considering the suggestions you have rudely urged concerning this adorable and angelic young lady, I shall not bestow it."

"But, at least, sir," said the cabman (who was evidently very civil, as cabmen go), "I hope you won't go and forget the half-pint of Scotch I got."

"Hush!" said Mr. Doughty. "I will not."

"Mr. Doughty," called she, "don't send the cab away; I shall want it to take me home presently. Ask the cabman to wait, please."

"All right, miss," the cabman answered for himself.

Isabel was returning to her father when she heard the voice of Mr. Doughty calling her. She waited, and he came to her with business-like air.

"One moment, Miss Raynor," said he. "I beg to resign the trust you confided to me;" and he handed back her purse. "The disbursements—of which I have made a note on this morsel of paper—cover Johnny Chinaman's charges and the cab-fare up till now, together with a shilling which I ventured to borrow to furnish some slight refreshment for the cabman and myself. Did I do wrong?"

"Oh no," said Isabel; and she secretly thought well of him for his confession that he had "borrowed." "But," she added, "you must take charge of a little money for my father. He ought, by-the-way, to eat something at once. I suppose he has not had much food at the Chinaman's these three days?"

"Food, Miss Raynor?" said Mr. Doughty. "The only food supplied or demanded in that Hades is opium! And the chief would not taste solid food at present if he had it."

"And the shops are all closed!" she exclaimed. She was thinking that she might have bought some soup for him; but nothing could be done now, and she reflected that, after all, he was probably no worse off than he had been many a time before after he had been satiated with his drug. It was inevitable he should wait for her provision, but she would insure that his wants should be properly supplied next day. "I suppose," said she, "that you have nothing in the house that could be easily got ready?"

"I do not know, Miss Raynor," said Mr. Doughty; "but I am tolerably sure there is not. Food, Miss Raynor, is not our strong point in this house."

"I suspected as much; but," said she, with good sense, "it is with neglecting your food that you foolish men confirm your dreadful habits."

"You are right, Miss Raynor. We weak male mortals go completely wrong when we have not the clear head and the strong heart of the better sex with us."

"Compliments again, Mr. Doughty," said Isabel.

"Simple truth, I assure you," said Mr. Doughty. "And now, Miss Raynor, will you permit me to say that I think it wise of you not to propose to hold much conversation with your father now? Apart from the fact that it is very nearly midnight, the chief is at this present time in his very lowest condition. I would offer to escort you to your—ahem!—abode, but I do not think it would be well to leave the chief alone as he is."

"What?" said Isabel. "He would not try, surely, to go back to that dreadful place?"

"No," said Mr. Doughty; "not that. But he might try to lay violent hands on himself. But pray do not be alarmed. I know his ways, and I will look after him. He sleeps little, but I sleep less, and on these particular occasions I keep a special watch upon him."

Isabel hesitated; for these words of Mr. Doughty brought back doubts and fears. Ought she to stay with her father—to soothe and strengthen him, if so be she might? It was characteristic of her frank independence and her lack of self-consciousness not to view this at all as a question of propriety with regard to herself. She entered the little sitting-room, determined to let herself be decided by what her father might chance to say. He was reclining limp in an easy-chair (the comfortless, castorless easy-chair of the London lodging-house), apparently in a state of apathy. His eyes found her, however, as soon as she entered.

"Don't take your things off," said he (she was only undoing a button or two of her jacket). "You must not stay here; this place is not fit for you."

"I will go," said Mr. Doughty, "and interview our landlady;" and he discreetly withdrew.

"I do not propose to stay, father," said Isabel, going nearer to him. "I have lodgings of my own."

"Don't come near me at present, my child," said he. "Sit there and let me look at you. I am glad you have rooms of your own; but not in this house, I hope—not in this house. It is a dreadful house." He kept his eyes sadly and wistfully fixed on her. "You have come to me as an angel of God, my dear. I do not ask you now how you found me; we will talk of that and other things by-and-by. I cannot talk of anything now; I—I am not well enough."

"Promise me, father," said she, leaning towards him, "that you will take some food at once."

"Food? I need no food now, my child. It is meat and drink to look on you. I have often longed to see you—to see how the poor baby that they took from me was grown."

"My poor father!" she cried; and before he could hinder her she was on her knees beside him.

"And you are my daughter!" said he, still gazing at her wistfully and half absently. "You are very beautiful, my dear—far more beautiful than I could have imagined you to be."

"Don't say these things, father," said Isabel, blushing, but pleased.

"It is a good thing to be beautiful, and it is good to know it. The chances are that a truly beautiful woman has a beautiful nature; there is no kind of doubt of that with you." Then he let his chin drop on his breast and fixed his eyes on vacancy as he murmured:

"'I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move;
Such an one do I remember—'

I cannot talk now; I am tired; I am not quite well." He roused himself a little and said: "Come and see me to-morrow, if you can. Yes, come, and I'll talk with you."

His chin dropped again on his breast, and his eyes closed. He seemed to slide away into sleep, and after a minute or two Isabel rose and quickly went out. She found Mr. Doughty waiting at the outer door to see her into her cab. She told him she would visit her father early next evening, gave him a kindly adieu, and was driven away as the clocks of Islington reproachfully tolled her out the hour of twelve.

CHAPTER XIII

SAHIB GEORGE

WHILE Isabel was thus occupied with the discovery of her father, the two young men down in Lancashire whose hearts she had set afutter and aflame—her Cousin George and Alan Ainsworth—had begun to apply themselves, each in his way, to the task of winning her. Ainsworth, on his part, had exerted himself to find a post in London, and had succeeded with a celerity that surprised him at the same time as it flattered his vanity; for he could not but think that his own deserts had much to do with his quick success. He did not then know nor guess—though when he did know he was properly humbled and chastened in spirit—that the chief whose service he was leaving, who was one of the best of men and editors, had really bespoken for him the place for which he had applied on *The Evening Banner*. All he was aware of in the excitement of the occasion was that the *Banner* wanted him in London at once, and that his chief had generously agreed to let him go.

George Suffield, on the other hand, had resolved upon a course which the committal of all the Suffield business into his hands left him free to choose. He had the self-confidence and the stout grain characteristic of so many Englishmen, which bear their possessors bravely through supreme difficulties of war, administration, and trade, but which cause them to blunder egregiously in the delicate business of love. George did not hesitate for a moment to believe that he would prevail on Isabel to be his wife, that his desire and his will must overbear all her scruples and doubts; he therefore wasted no time in vague longings, in downcast speculations as to ways and means of making himself more agreeable to her; he meant to marry her, to keep loyally his promise not to trouble her with his addresses for a time, and meanwhile to prepare such a position for her as could not fail to fill her and himself with joy and pride. The Suffield business was big, but he would make it bigger. The dear old dad—bless him!—had prospered exceedingly in the good old jog-trot ways; but his son was born into a

sharper, adroiter (perhaps less scrupulous) time, when a fortune might be made at a stroke, and he was resolved to lose no advantage which the turning of the wheel of trade might offer him.

It chanced that Fate (or the Devil) had just then placed at his elbow a subtle, insinuating adviser to tempt him into risky ways. An unusual adviser—an unlikely adviser, many might think—but all the more dangerous a tempter for his being unusual and unlikely. Daniel Trichinopoly had been taken into the service of the firm, apparently; in reality, he was attached to the person of young Mr. Suffield, much as he had been to that of the Sahib Raynor. There was nothing of the firm's usual business to which he could be set, but he lightly and easily slipped into the place of personal attendant and deferential and confidential retainer to the Sahib George. And George was more than pleased. He was of a generous and magnificent nature; it did not trouble him that Daniel did little or nothing to earn the emolument conferred on him; it was enough—indeed, more than enough—that he flattered him by his subservience, and added to his feeling of consequence by his dark and inferior presence. Daniel put on a lavish show of obsequious admiration and affection, and George patronized and protected him. George suggested that since Daniel was to go in and out with him among the throngs of men, it would be well if he dress more in the English mode—he would give him wherewithal to array himself properly; and Daniel humbly crossed his dark hands on his white guileless bosom and professed the extremest desire to please his master, who was great and good, strong and beautiful—the heavens, said Daniel, were wide, but they were not wider than the beneficence of the Sahib George. So Daniel dressed himself in English attire (dark trousers and a loose alpaca coat), all except his head, on which he still wore the blameless turban, and was thenceforward assiduous in his service and in his flattery. He looked after the clothes of Sahib George; he waited upon the Sahib George at table and cooked rare little dishes for him; he fetched and carried for the Sahib George, and, like a faithful dog, was always found at heel when wanted either in the house or in the works or in the office in town; and constantly he dropped the insidious word in season into the Sahib George's ear. George had a vast opinion of his own shrewdness and judgment, but in reality he had much of his father's simplicity. He had a kind of large, open contempt for Daniel, and he would have been amazed and indignant if an acute observer had hinted that his black henchman

was beginning to exert a prodigious influence over him; yet the extent of Daniel's influence even in the first week of his service may be judged from the following.

There had been supplied to the Suffield mills by a Liverpool broker sundry bales of American cotton which, when opened, made George swear, not loud, but deep. Not only was the cotton of inferior quality, but the weight was made up by stones and other foreign rubbish packed in the midst of the bales. He exclaimed, in the hearing of Daniel, against the villany of American shippers and Liverpool brokers both.

"With regard, Sahib George," said Daniel, in his child-like humility, "why the sahibs of the great English mills do they use much—much American cotton? I beg to try to understand, but the same time I must say I am not able. I have think very much, but—no—it is not for the scarcity of fine and pure cotton stuff non-procurable. The native cooly of India, my own people—oh yes!—they grow much—much cotton. With regard, sahib, why the English sahibs buy they not very much the cotton of their own great India? I beg to understand."

George answered carelessly that not very much Indian cotton came into the market, and that what did was short and dirty; the fact was, he knew very little about it.

"With regard, sahib," asked the simple Daniel, "do he also have big stones in the middle of him? I beg to understand."

George did not know. But the effect of Daniel's words was that George resolved to inquire concerning Indian cotton the next time he visited Liverpool—and that was after two or three days.

It was thus that George Suffield set out upon his independent and aspiring course; and he was in that mood when Ainsworth chanced to meet him on the very last day of his Lancashire sojourn. Ainsworth had said farewell to *The Lancashire Gazette* in the morning betimes, and had arranged to travel to London by a late train, intending to spend the interval with a college friend who was a journalist in Liverpool. He was thus in Liverpool in his friend's company at the hour of lunch. His friend proposed to entertain him at a club whither resorted at luncheon-time many representatives of Liverpool commerce—Liverpool shippers and Liverpool brokers, especially brokers. When they entered the dining-room of the club Ainsworth discovered George Suffield occupied at one of the tables with three or four men. George did not see him, and he, remembering how they had parted at Whitsuntide, made no

show of acquaintance with George. When they had withdrawn to the smoking-room, however, a hand was laid on Ainsworth's shoulder, and a cheery voice spoke in his ear—the hand and the voice of George Suffield.

"Who would have thought of meeting you here, Ainsworth?" he exclaimed. "Not that you haven't as much business to be here as any one else, but I should have thought you'd be occupied with your paper at this time of day."

Ainsworth introduced him to his companion, and said that he was done with *The Lancashire Gazette*, and was going to London that very night.

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed George. "You must come and dine with me—that is, if you have nothing better to do."

Ainsworth answered that he doubted whether he could wait in Liverpool for dinner; he intended to travel late, but not so late as to preclude his reaching London and a hotel before midnight. While he spoke he noted that George Suffield's eye wandered to a centre-table, on which stood a rough deal box, and about which members of the club kept coming and going more and more with a subdued hum of talk and occasional bursts of laughter.

"What is going on there?" asked Ainsworth, looking from George to his friend.

His friend answered that he did not know, and rose to look.

"It's something of mine," said George, with a conscious blush. "I put it there. It's merely a joke, but I wish to show them—the cotton-brokers, I mean—that that kind of thing shouldn't be allowed to happen too often. By Jingo!" he said, "somebody's writing on the box."

Somebody *was* writing in large chalk letters on the side of the open box—writing something which made those who read shout with laughter.

"Let's see what it is," said George, going to the table.

Ainsworth went with him, meeting his friend, who laughed and said, "It's not a bad joke." This is what Ainsworth saw: In what appeared to be a large starch-box was a big stone, on which was pasted a written label: "*Specimen of Messrs. Jones's Middlings*;" and on the box itself had just been written in chalk: "*Specimen of Messrs. Suffield's size-box*." Ainsworth was sufficiently acquainted with the terms of Lancashire trade and manufacture to know that "middlings" meant bale-cotton of average good quality, and that size was the stuff with which manufacturers

liberally dressed their webs to give their cotton cloths and calicoes more apparent substance. So he understood and laughed. George Suffield had got *quid pro quo*, a Roland for his Oliver.

"So this is your joke, is it, Suffield?" said a little man, coming and looking grimly on the small boulder.

"Yes, Jones," said George. "And this"—pointing to the chalk writing—"may be considered your joke; it has been made for you. So we're quits."

Mr. Jones smiled wryly, but he said nothing; and George returned, and sat down with Ainsworth.

"They laugh," observed George, in confidence, "but they don't like it; I can see they don't. Of course, I know it's not they that put stones and old iron and rubbish in the bales to make weight; but they are responsible: they should keep their shippers in order. No; I can see they don't like it. But that doesn't matter. I can do without them better than they can do without me. I can ship my own cotton if I like—and I will! And you are going to London to-night, Ainsworth? I wish you could stay and dine with me."

Thus he continued, trying to show interest in Ainsworth, but continuing to be excited and occupied with the effect of his practical joke on the cotton-brokers. Presently there appeared on the opposite side of the street, looking up at the window where they sat, a black man in a white turban. Ainsworth noticed him first.

"Is not that," said he to George, "the black fellow that was Mr. Raynor's servant? I suppose he is in your service now; he is looking as if he wished to attract your attention."

Daniel was, in fact, smiling and smiling, with a gentle inclination of the head.

"Yes," said George, "that's Daniel. He is my servant now—a useful, faithful creature," said he, with a pointed smile, which obviously meant: you suspected him once; but we won't return upon that. "I think he must have something important to tell me. Excuse me a minute." In a little while he returned in haste, and said, "I find I must say good-bye; there is some business I must attend to on The Flags"—by which name Ainsworth knew the quadrangle of the Exchange was meant. "I dare say you'll be seeing the governor and all of them soon. Remember me to them. Bye-bye."

That was the last Ainsworth saw of the triumphant George, and the picture dwelt in his memory.

In an hour he was walking with his friend to the Central Station. As they entered upon the platform a group of three strange creatures arrested their attention: Daniel Trichinopoly, in his white turban and his black alpaca coat (underneath which shone his red *cummerbund*); a Parsee, fat of feature and of form, topped with his notable brimless Parsee hat and a grotesque, hideous creature in ordinary English dress, whose face made one think he must have been buried and dug up again when partly decayed, and whom Ainsworth's friend recognized as a Greek or Levantine well-known as a frequenter of The Flags. They were engaged in serious converse, and Ainsworth wished that George Suffield could see them so; for even the best of men may desire to show himself justified in his suspicions—to say, "Didn't I tell you so?"

"Don't they look a sinister and villanous trio!" exclaimed Ainsworth. "Did you ever see three men together that looked liker a conspiracy of evil? What are they talking about, I wonder. Something wicked, with money in it, I'll be bound!"

His friend suggested that the man in the white turban looked a simple, honest, good-natured creature.

"Look at that hard, glittering eye!" said Ainsworth; "it's as cruel as a snake's! I should not be surprised to discover he was the greatest scoundrel of the three. I dislike the looks of the others, but I distrust him upon instinct!"

So he entered the train, and returned whence he had come in the morning. When he left the train he did not need to leave the station, for his luggage was already there in waiting for his journey to London. He turned on the platform to survey his fellow-passengers, wondering if the wearer of the white turban was among them. He was—along with the fat Parsee.

"It is odd," said he to himself, as he saw them walk away together, "that that is the very combination I guessed when I saw the turbaned scoundrel in the Suffield's mill."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FATTED CALF

THE morning after Isabel found her father she woke early with the horror of the opium-den upon her, and she began to reflect what was to be done with him. All day, at school, when not engrossed with her teaching, she considered what arrangements she could make for his comfort and reclamation—yes, reclamation. She did not like to think the word in regard to her father, but she did not know any other (nor do I) that would cover the necessities of his case. She pondered one plan after another, but she finally returned to that of which she had first thought—she must bring her father to live with her. She saw that if she did not she could not properly tend and control him. She was not unaware what that decision might entail upon her—what anxiety, what risk, and what loss even; but yet she returned to it, and that not merely from an impulsive sentiment. She perceived clearly enough that such a habit as her father's, maintained more or less for twenty years and longer, must not only have "shattered" his nerves (as Mr. Doughty declared), but also have sapped his will and ruined his self-respect, and that, therefore, to restore him to himself would be both an onerous and a tedious task, demanding tact, resource, and patience—in a word, demanding love. She perceived also certain side-issues likely to arise from her contemplated action: her father might (probably would) sometimes break away from her control, cause disquiet in their lodging, and bring upon her more expense than she could well bear; and her uncle—both her uncles—might become alienated from her—at least, for a time. And why should she take this burden upon her? Because it was her duty? Because he was her father? Not altogether. Isabel was a young lady of the kind that the forces of education are tending to make increasingly common: she did not accept an opinion or perform an action merely because tradition or convention said it was right; she sought to prove all things, and at the same time to hold fast to that which is good. She had concluded long ere this that, as

loosely and foolishly applied, "Duty means something disagreeable which other people think you ought to do;" and if she had thought the particular line of conduct that lay before her disagreeable, and if she were driven to argue about it, she might have shown sufficiently that it was not her bounden duty to rescue her father from the fate to which he had committed himself, since she owed him nothing but her being. But she had not troubled to argue so; indeed, like a true woman, she had attained her conclusion not at all by course of argument—she merely did not herself think of the word "duty" in connection with her father, and would have resented its use by another. The fact that her father was her father inclined her to him, and the discovery that he had something about him which pleased and charmed her made her inclination into positive attraction. In spite of his appearance, in spite of all, she liked him and she thought well of him; but it is probable she would not have turned her energies with such generosity and alacrity to his resuscitation and rehabilitation had she not believed him to be a man of talent and attainment.

When school was over she hurried away to her lodging to begin the fulfilment of her purpose. She inquired of her landlady if there was an unoccupied bedroom in the house. Yes; there was a bedroom—"the second-floor back"—recently vacated by a young gentleman that kept late hours.

"Almost as late as yourself, miss," said the landlady, pointedly.

"It would probably suit me," said Isabel, ignoring her allusion. She added, on an impulse of mischief, "It is for a gentleman I should want it, Mrs. Wiffin."

"Lawk-a-daisy me, miss!" exclaimed Mrs. Wiffin, subsiding into a chair, with her hands limp in her lap. "The flurries and the worrits you put me into! you do, indeed! A gentleman! Pr'aps you're thinking of getting married. But the ways of gentlefolk must be changed. When I was a girl you'd ha' no more thought of having your intended to live in the same house with you than— There! Well, you're a good, clever, innocent young lady, I believe, but take my word for it men are all bad when they get the chance. And you're a handsome, fine figure of a girl, my dear, and no mother to tell you things, as I often think to myself when I'm waiting up for you at night."

"You are a dear, good soul, Mrs. Wiffin," laughed Isabel, sitting down and taking her landlady's hand, "and I shall try not to flurry and worry you any more."

"There's a dear!" said Mrs. Wiffin, patting her hand. "You see I'm so perceptible to things that touch my feelings."

Then Isabel revealed to Mrs. Wiffin as a secret that must be kept from every one that it was for her father she desired the extra room; he was in poor health and must be kept quiet, and therefore she wished to take charge of him; at all which Mrs. Wiffin expressed her surprise and admiration.

She had just sat down to have (as women foolishly will) a make-shift meal when there was a loud rat-tat-tat at the street door, and her uncle—Uncle Harry—was shown into her little sitting-room.

"Ah, there you are," said Uncle Harry. "I'm restless. I've had a walk across the Park, and I thought I'd just have a cup of tea and a chat with you, my dear."

"It is good of you, uncle, to drop in like this," said Isabel.

"In this soft London air," said Uncle Harry, stirring the cup of tea which his niece handed him, "I am beginning to find I have a liver. I never knew before I had one; but I suppose that rascal Daniel's curries, of which I have eaten too many, have developed it."

"And how," laughed Isabel, "do you propose to get rid of your liver, uncle?"

"By strict regimen," the doctor says, "and by exercise; by eating and drinking, that is to say, what I don't like, and by walking more than is comfortable or even possible in London streets and back gardens."

"Don't you think, uncle," said Isabel, with a smile, "a homœopathic treatment would be better? Eat and drink what you like—curry or whatever it may be—but in small doses."

"Gad!" said he, "that's a good suggestion: homœopathic!" And he smiled most agreeably, his eyes being involved in good-natured wrinkles. "You're a very clever girl, you know."

Since he had sat down it was inevitable that she should have his brother—her father—in her thought. And still as she looked at him and observed the varying expression of his face, she noted how like he was to his brother and yet how unlike they were, she said to herself, as a complete personality cleft in two—Uncle Harry being as the male half, hard and alert; and her father being as the female, soft, sensuous, and plastic.

"Uncle Harry," said she, "have you ever known any one who had for years been addicted to a subtle and insidious kind of poison?"

"Drink, do you mean?" asked Uncle Harry, frowning.

"Something like that," said she.

"I've known tens—hundreds," said he.

"What would you do with a person of that sort?"

"I'd let him drink himself dead," said Uncle Harry; "it's all you can do."

"Nonsense, uncle," said Isabel. "There's surely no habit but can be changed so long as you have a body and a mind. Suppose you wanted to cure a person of that kind, how would you treat the person?"

"Cut off the liquor at once," said Uncle Harry.

"Don't you think," said Isabel, "that the homœopathic way would be better? Your way seems to me so sudden and dangerous. The person who gets into the habit of drinking to excess, for instance, drinks because of his craving for a stimulant; if you wish to cure him, should not your procedure be first to vary the stimulant?"

"My experience has been," said Uncle Harry, "that a man takes drink because he likes it."

"Likes the effect," said Isabel, "which is stimulative, less or more." Then, continuing her exposition of her view, she went on: "First, vary the stimulant. For instance, in place of dreadful strong spirits, give him light wine and good, stimulating food. A person that is given to drinking to excess seldom eats much, does he?"

"Very seldom; never, I may say. As I heard a soldier once put it, 'He eats his beer.'"

"Very well; get your person to eat well; that will be a new form of stimulation for him. Then gradually direct his attention from these gross and unwholesome forms of stimulation to others of a refined and wholesome nature—to music (if your person is that way inclined), and so on."

Perceiving the pertinacity with which his niece followed out this exposition, Uncle Harry observed her closely—not exactly with wonder, but with the question in his mind: "Yes, of course; but why such steadfast earnestness in this?" Isabel, seeing his intent look and suspecting what might be in his thought, dropped her inquiry, saying, "After all, speculation of that kind is foolish, is it not?"

"Speculation," said he, sententiously, "is neither wise nor foolish in itself, but only in regard to the actions it may lead to."

Having thus closed that discussion, he said, in a manner meant to be very cordial, that he had come on purpose to have a chat about something else ; and Isabel, in a tone likewise meant to be very cordial and affectionate, begged to know what it was, while she feared, with a glance at the clock, that she would be much later than she had intended to be in setting out to her father. He was very comfortable, he said, with George and Joanna ; he had pitched his tent in their back garden ; but he had come to think he would like a "pitch" of his own ; he did not like his daily view of other people's back windows, and he did not like to order about other people's servants. Isabel thought (with her eye on the clock) that it would be very lonely for him to live by himself. Naturally, he said, with a laugh — but he feared he bored his niece ; he would come to the point ; he had his eye on a companion ; oh, dear, no ! he did not mean marriage — nothing so foolish as that ; but yet he meant a lady. And still Isabel furtively eyed the clock.

"It's you I mean," he said, suddenly. "Would it trouble you, do you think, to join hands with me — to live with me ? I'm sometimes crotchety, cranky, and crusty, I believe ; but you're a sensible girl ; you could manage me, I've no doubt. I think we should suit each other. What do you say, my girl ?"

"You are very kind, uncle," said she, quickly, very much astonished and perplexed, and becoming pale under her uncle's shrewd, expectant gaze ; she now perceived her difficult position. "The kindness of your proposal is overwhelming. But I — I think I had better remain as I am."

"Oh," said he, with an involuntary snap like the closing of a box. He frowned a little in evident vexation. "You like your independence, I suppose, and your freedom."

"It's not that, uncle. No, no ; it's not that. I am, believe me, not so enamoured of my independence and freedom. Sometimes they are a trouble and a burden ; for, you see, I am a woman — to my great regret."

"Oh, what is it, then ?" asked he, softening his heart again and leaning with a smile over the table. "Come, now ; speak to me as you would to a father. Tell me frankly."

"Frankly, then, uncle," said Isabel, "a week ago I would have accepted your proposal gladly, gratefully."

"A week ago !" said he, leaning back again. "I see ! I see ! You think I was unjust to you at first, and now you won't accept

any of my kindness. Don't you think that is rather—well, *mean*? though it is not a word I should have thought of applying to you."

"Oh, uncle, pray do not think that!" she cried. "It would, indeed, be mean if that were my reason! Don't I know how very kind your offer is? Don't I see that you are thinking more of me than of yourself in making it? And I confess that three days ago even I would have welcomed your generosity; it *is* generous and good of you, and it pains me very much to say I can't accept it now. That may seem to you strange; but something has happened within the last day or two, and I have undertaken a responsibility which I cannot lay aside, and which demands that I should live as I am."

Her uncle wrinkled and puckered his brows in disappointment and suspicion, and drummed on the table.

"I suppose," said he, "you would say it is no business of mine to ask the nature of the responsibility?"

"No, no, uncle. I would not say anything of the kind. Indeed, I would not. I cannot really tell you, but not because I think it impertinent in you to ask. I may tell you some day—by-and-by; but I cannot tell you now. Pray, believe me, uncle."

"I do believe you, my dear," said he, patting the hand she extended to him. "And I believe you are too sensible and clever not to have a sufficient reason for what you are doing and for keeping it to yourself. Do not trouble yourself. Be good. But I suppose this responsibility won't remain on you forever? When it's gone will you promise me to consider my offer?"

"I cannot say how long the responsibility may remain; but it may modify itself; in any case, I promise."

Then Uncle Harry rose to go.

"I dare say," said he, "you feel scarcely equal to a walk this afternoon. You look a little upset, and had better rest, perhaps. If," he continued, holding her hand and looking at her kindly, "you should want to confide in me by-and-by about any difficulty, you will not find me backward to help you."

"You are very good, uncle," said she; "and I may come to you for advice by-and-by."

When he was gone she turned her thought again to her father with a new cheerfulness and prospect. If she could contrive to reconcile the brothers, might not they yet live, all three, in happy concord? But she could not yet attempt to bring them together; she must first know her father better and effect considerable im-

provement in his health and conduct. At present she must act, and neither speculate nor dream. She arrayed herself with care (for she felt it would be an advantage with her father to please his eye), and then went out to take the train to King's Cross. When she left that station she made several purchases, and then entered the 'bus for New North Road. Arrived there, she looked about for a fishmonger's, and, having given an order, she went on to her father.

When she was over against Mrs. Ackland Snow's she was met by Mr. Doughty, newly shaved and brushed. He made her an elegant bow and walked on by her side, halting a little on his stick. His conversation was impressive, solemn, and somewhat lugubrious. The chief had spent a bad, restless night, and so had he. Had her father, Isabel asked, eaten well? He had eaten the usual "meal of resistance" about two o'clock—an overdone chop, and little else. But what Mr. Doughty chiefly wished to utter at the moment was his unbounded gratitude for what Miss Raynor, he was morally certain, intended to do for her father. He loved and revered the chief—he had been with him for more than twenty years in all variations of temperature and weather—and all he asked for himself was that he might not be completely cut off from the society of the chief—that he might be allowed occasionally to see and speak with him. And yet another boon he asked.

"I have had a scene with the chief," said he. "He wished to know how you had found him out, and he asked me full in the face if I had written to you. With his eyes on me I could not prevaricate, as, I confess, I had intended to do; it is an astonishing thing that you *cannot* prevaricate to those eyes of his. I admitted I had written to you. Do not, I beg of you, let him learn that I have written oftener than once; for he would never forgive me if he knew."

As Isabel entered the little parlor, she saw her father sitting where she had left him the night before, wrapped in an old overcoat, and reading a book. When he rose to greet her, she perceived that he looked gray and pinched with fatigue; and she noted, moreover, that her appearance had called forth in him a dim gush of tender emotion, which passed upon his countenance like a breath upon a mirror. He appeared shyer with her than he had been the night before, and she felt (as only a woman can subtly feel) that he regarded her presentment with distinct approval.

"I knew you would come," said he, taking both her hands in

his, "but I did not expect to see you so early. Will you excuse me for a minute?"

He retired into an inner room, and Isabel laid aside her hat and jacket, turned to Mr. Doughty in haste, and begged his assistance in setting forth the table. Mr. Doughty was appalled; for there was, as he said, "a precarious and perplexing litter" on the table of books and papers. The table was at length cleared, however, and with the aid of a girl tempted up from the basement, who smiled on Isabel in surprise and admiration, the cloth was duly laid. Mr. Doughty's spirits gradually rose, till, when Isabel had set out a fowl all ready cooked, bread and butter, and a lettuce and herbs for a salad, and had exhibited a bottle of Burgundy, and asked him to draw the cork, he exclaimed, "Really, Miss Raynor, you appear to me to have made provision for a feast of Apicius!"

There were no wine-glasses to be found, but Isabel thought tumblers would do, and Mr. Doughty readily agreed with her, and delicately and lovingly, with just the proper twist, like a father drawing his child's tooth, he drew the cork of the Burgundy.

"Please, 'm," said the little maid-servant, bursting in, all aglow with excitement, "here's the winkles!"

"The winkles!" exclaimed Isabel.

"Yass, 'm. The boy's jes' bring 'em from the fish-shop!—on a tray!—such a lot! They do look nice!"

"Oh, the oysters!" said Isabel, and went with a dish to receive them.

"Oysters!" exclaimed Mr. Doughty, as she went out. "Let me see; how long is it since the chief and I have tasted an oyster?"

At that instant the chief himself re-entered, clean and clothed, and stood in surprise. He did not speak, but his bright eye—bright and open as a child's—quickly comprehended the meaning of the display. When his daughter reappeared bringing in the oysters tears sprang to his eyes.

"You should not have done this," he said. "It is very good of you, but we ate abundantly a few hours ago; did we not, Alexander?"

"We did," answered Mr. Doughty—"sumptuously;" but he added the saving phrase, "for us."

"Abundance is relative, father, is it not?" said Isabel, with a bright smile. "But we can talk of that by-and-by. Discussion may, but oysters must not, be kept waiting. Let us sit and eat,

father. Mr. Doughty, will you look after the wine?—you understand it.”

She shrewdly guessed her father liked the turn of her phrases, and she had assurance of that when, surveying her deliberately with pride and pleasure, he said, “I believe you are a very clever girl, my dear. And I have a conviction that a new epoch in my life has begun.” He pressed her hand, a tear again moistened his eye.

“Now let us eat,” said she. “No vinegar for me, thank you,” she remarked presently to Mr. Doughty. “I prefer their native flavor.”

“‘Native flavor,’” said her father, “is a good phrase; doubly good.”

“It is certainly ‘doubly good,’” crackled Mr. Doughty; “for it includes—”

“Oh, pray, Alexander,” exclaimed Mr. Raynor, “do not explain why! My excellent friend Alexander, my dear,” said he to his daughter, “has a poor opinion of the human understanding; he always spreads his meaning out in plain, large type. Really, my dear,” he went on, “these oysters are extremely good. They help to demonstrate that ‘Appetite doth grow by what it feeds on.’”

“Which is more than can be said—is it not?—for your usual diet, father,” said she. “Your diet is commonly too abstemious, I believe.”

“No, my dear,” said he; “I think not. No; we have pretty fairly divided our tastes between the flesh-pots of Egypt, and the onions, the leeks, and the garlic; have we not, Alexander?”

“I would exclude the leeks and the garlic, sir,” said Alexander; “they did not, I believe, come in our way.”

“You are literal, Alexander,” said Mr. Raynor.

“I hope,” said his daughter, “they were at least well cooked.”

“No, Miss Raynor,” said Mr. Doughty, with feeling; “they were very ill cooked, indeed, I assure you.”

“That’s a pity,” said she; “for good food well cooked is the source of most of the virtues of men.”

“My dear,” said her father, considering her again with a smile of delight, “you are a very clever girl, but you appear to have taken up with a very materialistic philosophy.”

Thus their talk went on in apparently aimless fashion, though Isabel, for her part, had a distinct end in view. She had quickly perceived that talk—bright, easy talk—was more to her father than

meat and drink, and she had resolved to indulge his taste to the best of her ability, even as she had already determined (will he, nill he) to feed him with nourishing food—all that she might have complete influence with him, and gradually build him up again into the stature of a man. Her father well said she was a very clever girl.

So they talked, and Isabel all the while kept a watchful eye on her father's plate and glass. When they were nearly empty she did not ask him if he would take more, but she quietly replenished them, so that he was not aware what she was about. It was only when his plate was quite cleared and his glass empty—when the salad was all eaten, and the wine all drank, and when there remained nothing of the fowl but a dismembered skeleton—it was only then that he came to himself.

"The food you have provided, my dear," said he, "has a magical effect. I do not seem to have taken much meat and drink, but yet I feel like him who 'On honey-dew hath fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise.' But now let us talk of our plans."

CHAPTER XV

PLANS AND PROSPECTS

MR. RAYNOR left the table and sat in his old easy-chair.

"Let us see," he said, resolutely. "Of course, my dear, you cannot come and stay here. I think this household is not conceived on such a scale as would admit of it; and the cooking is not good. Certainly," he added, with a reflective eye on the table, "it is not good; and the beds are not soft enough for a lady to lie on."

"I like a hard bed, father," said Isabel, humoring his bent.

"You would not like our hard beds here. They are not merely hard, they are rocky. Why, mine often feels to me like a pavement of cobble-stones. I lie down a man, and rise up a bruise. No, this house won't do. Alexander, we must find other and better rooms. We shall require three bedrooms and a sitting-room, or even a couple of sitting-rooms—a larger and a smaller. I think it might be a good idea to inquire the rent of a flat, Alexander. What do you think?"

"I will inquire, sir," said Alexander, "if you desire me to."

"Now what rent do you think we can afford, Alexander? Give me a sheet of paper and a pencil, will you?"

Alexander found these articles, and handed them solemnly to him while he continued talking. He reckoned that he and Alexander could earn £500 a year. Alexander suggested it would be better to say four, but his chief did not agree with him; for, when you are once about it, five is as easy to get as four. So he seriously set himself to calculate on this imaginary basis of income what amount might be disbursed for rent, what for food for three people (and a domestic), and what for clothes and pocket-money. And Isabel sat and listened; she understood her father better than ever, and she now perceived how little able he must ever have been to take care of himself and to battle with the world. "And yet," she said to herself, "how sensible he is in his imaginings!—and how well he means, the dear father!—and how generous he

would be if he could!" It was, of course, perfectly plain that he intended now to assume the responsibility of his daughter, and all her needs; he even presently hinted that it would be well so to regulate expenditure that something considerable might be put by every year to make a marriage-portion for her; and Isabel had not the heart to show that she doubted very much whether any income (to speak of) would be earned by him. She let him think (she believed it would be good for him to think) that he was now about to keep his daughter, and that she was dutifully going to accept his protection.

"You do not ask me, father," she said, "if I have any views on this matter."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Doughty, readily. "You had better listen to what Miss Raynor may have to say. She is quite as wise in these matters—perhaps wiser than we are."

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," said he. "Forgive me;" and he prepared to give instant heed to what she might say.

"I would like to point out, father," said Isabel, "that before we can occupy a flat we must have a tolerable amount of furniture, which will cost a good deal of money at once."

"True, my dear," said her father, humbly; "I had not thought of that. I perceive my lapse of actuality."

"Therefore," continued Isabel, with inexorable logic, "we cannot think of occupying a flat for some time. If we try to find nice furnished rooms—that, too, would take some time."

"Would it, Alexander?" asked her father.

"Some time, certainly," answered Alexander.

"Now I have a plan which will work till something better is got ready," pursued Isabel. "I cannot come to you here, father, but you can come to me. I have lodgings in a very nice house, and I can arrange for rooms for you and Mr. Doughty. That would entail no delay; for you can come at once."

"At once!" exclaimed her father, turning pale at the thought of having to take immediate action. "'At once,' my dear, is very sudden!"

"To-morrow, then," said Isabel; and though exciting, that suggestion did not seem so disquieting as the other; he was prepared to discuss it. "Let us talk about it, my dear," said he. He doubted whether the landlady would like it; and he doubted "the equity and prudence" of so sudden a move; and so on.

Isabel was good-naturedly ready to discuss it as much and as

frequently as he liked ; but she had made up her mind that her father should come to her on the morrow (she would arrange with Mr. Doughty to bring him); for she clearly perceived that he, if left to himself, would discuss the matter subtly and casuistically over and over again, and never stir.

When Isabel left her father it was about nine o'clock. She rode from the New North Road to King's Cross outside the omnibus ; for the night was warm and fine, being well into June, and the interior of the 'bus would, she knew, be unbearable. She was in high spirits when she set out, with the prospect of success in her mission to her father, and her elevated ride raised them still higher. The air was bland and cool, and the view which spread before her as she descended Pentonville Hill, with the gorgeous, transfused, smoky effect of a London sunset behind the distant pinnacled mass of St. Pancras Station, somehow encouraged hope. The world appeared to her very beautiful ; even the world of sordid houses and swarming men and women and children around her was glorified by the mysteries of Life and Love. Her thoughts, of course, mainly dwelt on her father, but, by a subtle, and (at first sight) not very apparent, connection, they also embraced Alan Ainsworth. She had been led to think of him a good deal during the last day or two, mainly by the coincidence that he, too, was a journalist, as her father was, or had been. Her knowledge of Alan Ainsworth, also, suggested to her the kind of alert, sensitive being her father must have been in the spring of his days, and bound the two together in a common interest in her mind. If the two only knew each other, what a pleasant association it would be ! She imagined them sitting over against her, and discussing all things of interest on earth and in heaven—Literature and Art, "Faith and Free-will, Foreknowledge Absolute." And the best was that she did not put away this picture as impossible of realization, because she knew that Ainsworth was coming to London, and that sooner or later she must meet him.

Science has had much to say lately concerning the circumambient ether—that it is the subtle medium for the transmission of light and heat ; that it is, probably, the element of electricity, and so forth. If the wonderful ether be all that, if it vibrate with light and heat, why should it not vibrate with love, which is of the essence of heat and light combined ? Why should it not subtly vibrate and communicate between one heart and another ? It is certain that at the same moment when Isabel Raynor was thinking

of Alan Ainsworth, Alan Ainsworth was thinking of her—though, it must be admitted, he had more sedulously thought of her during the last day or two than she had thought of him. He was in London, and had got to work. He had been very much occupied, but yet he had found time to hang about the College for Ladies and the neighborhood where he knew she lodged on the chance of encountering her. He longed with all his impulsive soul to see her and to talk with her, though he did not know he had anything particular to say. He had written to Suffield as soon as he had arrived in town; but he had not yet heard from him; and he waited and longed. On this very evening he had walked out of his lodgings to eat his evening meal at a café at King's Cross. He had eaten his food to the accompaniment of chiming thoughts of work and of Isabel; and he had walked out with such thoughts still chiming in his mind, when he chanced to look up and see Isabel descending upon him, as it were from above.

Isabel, we know, held a return ticket from King's Cross to Baker Street, and she stood for an instant on the pavement in hesitation whether to descend into the sulphurous atmosphere of the Underground or to sacrifice her ticket and walk the remainder of the way. She stood thus when she became aware of a tall man regarding her from a step or two off. As soon as her eye lighted on him the tall man smiled and approached with his hand out. It was Alan Ainsworth.

"So we have met again," said he. "I am very glad. I have been hoping to meet you; but London is such a great place, everybody that lives in it seems to revolve in a wider orbit than usual, so that it may take years to cross a friend's course. We will get jostled about if we stand here. Which way are you going, Miss Raynor?"

"I am on my way home to my lodgings," said she; "and I was just considering when I saw you if I should go by train or walk."

"Oh, walk, please, walk," said he; "that is, if it is not too far, and if I may accompany you."

"It is not so very far," she answered quietly, though she perceived his eagerness and delight, and though these feelings in him gave a nameless delight to herself. "My rooms are near Baker Street. But I would not like to take you out of your way—and you may be busy."

"My way lies westward, too; and I am not busy. And even if

I were, that would not matter. I have been wishing to meet you, and I've met you."

"But," said she, with a smile, "you have not been long in London, have you?"

"Two days," he answered. "Two whole days. I came up sooner than I had intended. A good post was offered to me, if I could enter upon its occupation at once. My late chief let me off—he has been very good to me; I have discovered since I came up that it was he that got me this offer. He has so overwhelmed me with kindness that I have been wondering whether I have behaved quite well to him."

"What!" said Isabel; "you think he has deliberately set himself to heap coals of fire on your head?" And she looked at him mischievously.

"Oh no," said he, suffused with her look. "I don't mean that. But, I fear, I am very egotistical; I have not asked you about yourself and your fortunes."

"Oh," said she, with a laugh, "my fortunes are not like yours; they are without excitement. My life swings quietly, for the most part" (with a reservation in her mind concerning the past day or two), "between my lodgings and school, school and my lodgings. I suppose, then, you are now established as a London journalist. I hope you have done well for yourself in leaving Lancashire."

"I am assistant editor and leader-writer on *The Evening Banner*, and my late chief has even recommended me for the theatres on *The None-Such*, which is, as you know, a slogging weekly."

"He seems, indeed, to be taking a kindly vengeance on you. What else has he done?" she asked, with a smile. "Has he not begged you to be so good as take his own place?"

"No," said he; "I will talk no more about myself. I have given myself away to you"—and he laughed, partly because of the ambiguity of his sentence; "but I did not guess you were an ironical person."

"Did you not?" said she. "Is it wicked to be ironical?"

"No, no," said he; "but if you absolutely decline to speak of yourself, lest I should be ironical, tell me about your uncles. Mr. Suffield has not delighted them yet, I see, with his voice in Parliament, but Mr. Raynor has lectured at the Royal Geographical. You went to the lecture, of course?"

Thus they talked as they walked along the Euston Road. Arrived at the corner of Euston Square by the St. Pancras Church

with its absurd caryatids, he stopped a moment and pointed down Woburn Place.

"My lodgings," said he, "are down there. They are handy for the office and for the reading-room of the British Museum. Do you ever go to the reading-room?"

"No," she answered, again with a spice of mischief; for a woman is never so irrestrainably mischievous as when she is pleased with her companion. "Why should I go? I am not a literary person at all."

"You might be if you liked," said he; "but I am glad you are not."

"Why?" she asked. "Does your assistant-editorial highness not approve of female writers? Would you like to keep writing a close guild for men?"

"Oh no," he answered, to the accompaniment of a fine frank blush; being but a mere blundering male creature, he wondered at the sharpness of her speech while he liked it. "I have no opinion on the question in general; I have only a feeling as to particular instances. I have met a few women that write, and I had rather not meet them again; that's all."

Then there began to flow in the mind of each a current of speculation and desire beneath the matters to which they were apparently giving their attention and of which they were talking. "Here," thought Ainsworth, "is the pleasantest, sweetest, most delightful comrade a man could have—pleasanter, sweeter far than any male comrade; and yet, I suppose, I must be cut off from her society except on certain precise and formal occasions when I may meet her in a company! I cannot ask her to drop in and see me, and she cannot (even if she wishes it) ask me to drop in and see her. Mrs. Grundy and propriety forbid it, because she is a lone woman and I am a lone man!" At the same time Isabel was thinking that she had not known Ainsworth quite so frankly and buoyantly boyish before. Was it the sense of being in a wilderness of men and women who did not care one jot for his existence that gave him that touch of naïve, irresponsible youthfulness? However it was, she liked his buoyancy and his boyishness, and she said to herself, "How he would delight in my father, and how my father would delight in him! How much good they might do each other! How stimulating each might be to the other! And yet I cannot bring them together! Can I? Why not? Why not, indeed? Am I ashamed of my father? Do I propose to keep him always hidden?"

And if I do not, why should I not show him at once—at least, to Mr. Ainsworth, who, I am sure, will neither misunderstand him nor me?" It is a very subtle and seductive experience that—the sure and certain feeling (which is more frequently based on intuition and understanding than on reason and knowledge) that there is one person who will never misunderstand or mistake you, whatever you may say or do; it is very closely akin to a fuller experience which Isabel had as yet no notion she was beginning to undergo.

Isabel, as we have seen, was a young lady who, when she had decided that a course was right, did not review and re-review her decision, and thus postpone action till the ebb of feeling.

"Mr. Ainsworth," said she, "have you ever heard speak of my father?"

"Your father!" exclaimed Ainsworth. "I did not know you had a father! I mean, of course, that I had always supposed he was dead."

"He has been virtually dead for many years—dead to me and to my aunt and uncles since I was a baby. Some other time I will tell you all about it. 'He was dead, but is alive again,'" she said, quoting but half-consciously the sacred words, "'He was lost and is found.' Yesterday I found him; I am just come from him now; and I am going to bring him to live with me—without, for the present, telling my uncles or my aunt anything about it."

"It is very noble, and beautiful, and filial of you!" said Ainsworth.

"No, no," said she; "it is not. Don't use such absurd adjectives. I am merely doing it because I like to do it."

"But," said he, "though it is not for me to question what you propose to do, may I suggest that you may not have considered all the trouble and—and distress that it may entail?"

"I have considered all that," said she. "I know what you are thinking of. But he is not a bad man, or a gross man. He is a clever, gentle creature—my poor father!—simple, weak, and docile as can be. You remember Coleridge and his besetting weakness? Well, my father is something like Coleridge. The habit that has ruined him is the same, and his cleverness is of the same kind, too. He is coming to me to-morrow, and I want to ask you to do me a favor: come and see him sometimes, and talk to him. He is very interesting, I think; he used to be an editor, and he writes still a little, and he and you may find each other good company;

at any rate, I am sure it will cheer and encourage him to find a young man interested in him."

"My dear Miss Raynor," said Ainsworth—and in his impulsive fervor he had to put a restraint on himself not to seize and press Isabel's hand; he grasped and pressed his own instead—"whatever I can do I will do, but do not use the word favor in connection with it."

"Thank you," said she, simply; his fervor made her somewhat shy. "I am hoping," she continued, "to cure him gradually of his habit."

"You will," exclaimed Ainsworth, in the fullest belief—"you will!"

"And, of course," said she, "you understand that all this is for the present a secret."

"I understand," said he. "And—and I appreciate your having taken me into your confidence."

"This," said she, stopping at a little gate (the number of which Ainsworth eagerly noted), "is where I lodge. Good-bye."

She gave him her hand and smiled frankly on him, so that he was penetrated through and through with delight. He looked back after he had turned away, and at the same instant she glanced over her shoulder. She smiled and nodded to him, he raised his hat and went on, ravished with her charm. Never, he thought, had there been so spirited a poise of head and neck as that she showed when she turned; never, certainly, had he seen so divine and thrilling a smile—a smile that had been all for him!—and never, surely, had there been in all the world a kinder, sweeter, more fascinating, or more beautiful woman than she! The red gold of sunset was glowing behind him as he walked away, and he murmured to himself:

"'Rosy is the west, rosy is the south;
Roses are her cheeks, and a rose her mouth!'"

CHAPTER XVI

"DANIEL WAS PREFERRED BECAUSE AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT WAS
IN HIM".

THERE can be no doubt that Daniel Trichinopoly won more and more upon his new master's confidence and liking. That day in Liverpool when George Suffield met and said farewell to Alan Ainsworth, Daniel had given such a sample of alertness as his master could appreciate. Somehow Daniel had learned that Mr. Gorgonio (the ugly Greek) had just received a consignment of exceptionally good Egyptian cotton, and was about to put it on the market. George hurried off to Gorgonio's office, saw a sample of the cotton, bought it at a cheap rate (for Egyptian was at that time quoted in the market at a somewhat low figure), and congratulated himself on the possession of Daniel.

"But, Daniel," asked George, when they met at home, "how did you know anything of Mr. Gorgonio?"

"Mister George," answered Daniel—for he had begun to drop "sahib" as unsuited to the usages of English commerce—"it will be an astonishment that I was met in the noble and great city of Liverpool with a gentleman of my own India, even and truly Mr. Tanderjee, Parsee from Bombay."

"Ah," said George, "Mr. Tanderjee; I have done some business with Mr. Tanderjee."

"The same time I must say Mr. Tanderjee take me with much talk, in our language—oh yes!—to Mr. Gorgonio. And with regard Mr. Gorgonio is not Greek, etcetera. Mr. Gorgonio is Perse."

"What do you mean, Daniel?" asked George. "He is Parsee, too—or Persian?"

"Yes, Mister George," answered Daniel. "The fact is, he is Perse of Persia. But I must say he has live, etcetera, in India, and he know to say in my language thing of all sort—oh yes! So just the same time we speak of cotton. With regards I hope you find, Mister George, that Mr. Gorgonio is a nice gentleman for business."

"Oh yes, Daniel," answered George, and turned away looking at his watch, as a man does who doubts he has been misspending his time.

But it was possible thus to ignore Daniel, to blot him out, so to say, whenever one was so minded; for Daniel was never obtrusive, never seemed to take offence, and was always gentle, bland, and smiling, and went and came softly. Indeed, his affection and his watchfulness were rather those of the cat than of the dog; and he purred softly his approval and satisfaction, his submission and attachment. Oh yes; Daniel was soft—so soft and gentle that one could not help stroking and liking him. It is probable George Suffield liked him all the more by reason of his difference from the Lancastrian faithful servant, of whom he had near him an admirable example in old Tummas, who neglected no duty, and grumbled and growled very loudly if he saw any sign of his master neglecting any.

But Daniel's success with his master was not a complete satisfaction to himself. For while the many wondered at it as a thing out of nature, a few resented it as a slight to themselves. Whenever Daniel passed through the village the wives came to their cottage doors with babies in their arms, and stared at him as he went by, and made depreciatory remarks, not caring whether Daniel heard them or not. "Be 't a man or a monkey?" they would say. "Be th' creature black a' through, dost think? Eh, what th' young mester sees in th' mon I conna mak' out!" And they further opined that Daniel worshipped images in his own country, and was probably guilty of other black and foreign practices. In spite of these things, Daniel smiled on the children as he went by, but they hid their faces in their mothers' bosoms or skirts, in fear of his black face and white turban. It was difficult, however, to endure the resentment of those who, like himself, were near the person of the young master, and who thought they had a greater right to the confidence of the master than a black man and a stranger. Of these the most resentful were old Tummas and the Tame Philosopher. Tummas would cock his eye at him over his bent old shoulder and demand, "Hast nought to do in tha own outlandish country?—hast never a feyther or mother belonging tha?—that thou mun come and slide thyself into th' place o' an Englishman?" adding, reflectively, while he narrowly considered Daniel this way and that, "Conna think what th' young mester sees in tha! Aw ha' seen mony a better man stuck in a field to scare th'

crows fro' th' turmits." Then Daniel would smile and say, "With regard, Mister Tummas, you are an old man, but it is possible to say you are not more wise than an ass; so just the same time why I listen, why I respect? Eh?" And Tummas would angrily reply, "Things is changed wi' me sin' I was young, see tha, or I'd box tha for that!" Upon which Daniel would smile sweetly, and still go and come softly.

But the resentment of Tummas was nothing to that of the Tame Philosopher—at least, in Daniel's opinion; for Daniel, while he despised Tummas, feared the philosopher. It is not very easy to account for such fear. It is probable that to Daniel's half-barbarous mind McFie appeared the incarnation of learning (had he not seen how the great Sahib Suffield listened to him?) and, by that token, of witchcraft and general power to do evil; it is probable, too, that McFie imposed on Daniel's imagination by a resemblance to the missionary who had turned Daniel's parents (and so had turned Daniel) from Buddhism to Christianity. The resemblance was less in the philosopher's garb, speech, or conduct than in the fact that he filled a certain sort of missionary office. The elder Suffield, on his migration south, had cast about in his mind for what provision he could make for his mentor without investing it with the odium of charity, and he had hit upon this, which was suggested to him by the desertion of an old chapel by a very ancient and feeble religious folk: that the philosopher might prelect and hold classes for the advantage of such as cared to come on certain week-nights (to be chosen by him), and discourse on life and mortality by the old dial and among the sinking and decaying tombstones of the little burying-ground. And the philosopher did so, and to his own infinite satisfaction; and he called the place Acadēmia, not because of the likeness to a place where boys and girls acquire the rudiments of learning, but because of its similarity to a famous Greek school of philosophy. The philosopher was always learned in his allusions. Moreover, the philosopher redeemed his missionary character in Daniel's eyes by a remarkable oration on an advertised evening. It happened that the incumbent of the new village church (whose tower was built up as the tower of Jumley-Jee) had preached a pointed sermon on the text, "And He hath made of one blood all nations," because he had heard of the contempt and derision in which the blameless Daniel was held by his parishioners. Thereupon the philosopher capped the incumbent's performance by giving on a week-evening a lecture on ethnology. A good

many people came together, and Daniel was also among them, and to his great delight heard himself (there could be no manner of doubt it was he) alluded to as "a member of the great Aryan or Indo-European family of nations, and second-cousin of every Englishman." That oration produced a very reasonable protest from Daniel. He waylaid the philosopher on his way home from the Acadēmia and spoke him fairly.

"With regard, O Guru," said he, gently, "your so wise, good, and beautiful talk, etcetera, have made me think very much—oh yes—in the head. With attention, I am what you say, Indo-Europe, yes? I am of the great India; I am in Europe—ra—is it not? Then, by argument, I am in the race, family, household, etcetera, of the English—is it not? I beg to understand, O Guru; because why, you are the wise one, the teacher of good and true things, and so forth."

"Yes, Daniel, my friend," crackled the conceited "teacher of good and true things, and so forth"—"most certainly, according to the best accessible evidence, you are, to all intents and purposes, of the same race as I myself."

"With regard, then, O Guru of the same race," said the triumphant Daniel, "why, then, do you not like that I am with or by the respectable Mister George? We are as one and another—you and I—so just the same we have our respected chance, luck, etcetera. Mister George like to have me, as dressing-boy, confidential servant, what-not, etcetera. Why not you like that he like? Eh?"

"Do I not like, indeed?" said the perplexed philosopher. "Assuming, Daniel, my friend, that I do not—remember that I am not admitting that I do not; I am only *assuming* that I do not, you understand—we come to the great difference, eternal and insurmountable, between opinion and sentiment. Opinion is one thing; sentiment is another. They are distinct the one from the other, and they do not necessarily touch or affect each other"—and so on the philosopher crackled and maundered for ten minutes, Daniel completely losing himself in toiling after him, and endeavoring to find a clear meaning in his maze of words.

Not many days afterwards it was made manifest that the philosopher, however pious might be his opinion of Daniel's equality in physical and mental attributes, had no opinion at all of Daniel's moral qualities. George Suffield had asked the philosopher to dinner one evening, not so much because he promised himself de-

light or edification in his company, but because he had promised his father that he would be "kind" to him. McFie came rather in a grudging and morose than in a grateful and expansive mood; for he considered that had his true friend, the elder Suffield, been at home, he would have been asked not once to dinner, nor twice, but as often as he cared to go. He was therefore somewhat distant and metaphysical with George during the first half of the meal, the more so that Daniel was present, waiting at table. But George was good-humored and talkative, the food was excellent, and the wine was good; and the hazy reserve of the philosopher gradually disappeared, and he became his casual, crackling self.

"Do you happen to know anything of cotton, Mr. McFie?" asked George.

"Cotton, sir?" said McFie, speaking with a dewy comprehensiveness. "I know all about cotton—all, I asseverate. I know cotton to be a plant grown in various parts of the world, most largely, I believe, in the United States of America—"

"And what of India, Mr. McFie? Cotton is grown largely in India, is it not, Daniel?"

"With regard, Mister George," answered Daniel, smiling demurely, "very much. But the Guru knows—oh yes!"

"—whose fruit or pod," continued McFie, "was, I doubt not, expressly designed by the devil for the debasement and enrichment—though the terms, indeed, are synonymous—of this county of Lancashire."

"One may call that," said George, with a laugh, "the abstract, or brief chronicle of cotton. What do you think of cotton, Daniel?"

"With regard, Mister George," answered Daniel, humbly crossing his hands on his breast, "I believe me to understand cotton as very good thing for the manufacture, the trade, and the business, etcetera. The native cooly of India, he would have no clothes to cover, no turban to keep the heat from the head, if there no cotton. With regard, me—I myself—would have no turban if no cotton."

"That, sir, only serves to convince me the more," said McFie, without looking at Daniel, "that the devil is in it;" and he crackled very loudly into a dissonant laugh.

"With permission, may I say," added Daniel, "the respectable Sahib Suffield, he have no house, no mills, no clothes, no food, etcetera, if no cotton. Is it not?"

"Pardon me, sir," said the philosopher, still not looking at Daniel, but fixing his eye on the sparkling stopper of the port decanter; "my admirable friend, George Suffield, is one of those who would live in the land, and verily would be fed, whatever happened to cotton, or if there never had been cotton; my dear sir, the very fowls of the air would bring George Suffield food if he ever wanted it!"

"Still, Mr. McFie," said George, after a side-long appreciation of the enthusiastic encomium on his father, "I think you are very unfair to cotton, considering that you and I and all of us eat cotton and drink cotton, build our houses of cotton and get our clothes out of cotton, find our pleasure in cotton (pass the wine, Daniel), and make our money of cotton! No, Mr. McFie, you must not depreciate cotton, especially since I have this very day invested a considerable sum in Indian cotton. Daniel, you can go; we shall not want you any more."

Daniel went, summing up with his eye in very doubtful and suspicious fashion the attitude and attention of the Guru. When he was gone McFie broke forth.

"Young George Suffield," said he, for all things had tended to make him valiant, "I think it my bounden duty, as your father's friend and as profoundly your well-wisher, to tell you that in the general opinion you are too thick with that son of India and of darkness. He is too much with you, and you place an extravagant amount of confidence in him."

"Ah," said George, with perfect self-satisfaction and good-humor, "you think that, do you? At least, you say that is 'the general opinion,' but it is yours also, I presume?"

"I do not shrink from declaring," said McFie, "that it is mine also. My dear young sir, if you must give confidence and take counsel, are there not old and tried friends of your father to whom you may turn, men of your own race and speech—like your humble servant—who have borne the burden and heat of the day?" And the philosopher tried to look as if he had borne an extraordinary amount of burden and heat.

"No doubt," said George, still good-humored, "there are men of that sort."

"There was once, sir," said McFie, with a pointed and inspired expression on his shrivelled countenance, "a great king in Israel who was succeeded in the kingdom by his son. That son meant very well, but by comparison with his father he was a little king,

a roi faintant. At a critical moment in his own and his kingdom's history he turned from the old men who had counselled his father and took advice from the young men who knew nothing, and he came to grief; ten-twelfths, sir, of his kingdom was rent from him! The name, sir, of the father was Solomon, and the name of the son was Rehoboam; and his history is set down as a warning for all time. Who hath ears to hear let him hear!"

"And the point," said George, smiling, "lays in the application, as Cap'n Cuttle would say. But even Solomon took counsel with the Queen of Sheba, didn't he? and she was blacker, I imagine, than even Daniel. For it's Daniel's color you object to, which surprises me, Mr. McFie, after your lecture of the other evening."

"My dear young sir," crackled McFie, in as brittle a temper as he ever permitted himself, "it is not the black of Daniel's skin I object to, but the black of Daniel's mind. I would object just as much, no less and no more, to the black of a white man's mind. But speaking in general, sir, I would say that the history of Daniel's race, and the history of himself, perhaps, also, predispose him to be wily, snaky, and crafty; craft is the inheritance of strength to which that kind of man is born; and speaking specifically, I would say that Daniel gives evidence that he is crafty and treacherous."

"What evidence?" asked George, still good-humored, but disposed to treat the question seriously, since he saw that the philosopher was bent upon being serious.

Then the philosopher expatiated at somewhat tedious length on the evidence of untrustworthiness and craft afforded by the honeyed (or treacled) smoothness of Daniel's speech, the softness of his step, and the cold, resolute frankness of his eye. Moreover, he asked, why should Daniel, a stranger and—comparatively speaking—a foreigner, profess such attachment and devotion to the person of young Mr. Suffield if he had not some secret end to serve?

"Well, Mr. McFie," said George, finally, "let us say no more about it. I am obliged to you for your intention of serving my father's son in the matter; but, believe me, he is not likely to do me any harm. There is nothing of any consequence intrusted to him; he is merely my servant, and as such I tell you frankly I like him and mean to keep him. Now have another glass of port."

By-and-by, when it was time for the philosopher to go home, George expressed his intention of accompanying him part of the

way; the night was fine and warm, and he would like the walk. The philosopher's cottage was on the farther side of the village, and their nearest and pleasantest way lay across the park and through the clough where the brook wimpled and the rabbits frolicked. They had passed out of the park, crossed the brook, got well into the clough, and were within easy sight of the works when George stopped with an exclamation.

"Is that a light?" he cried, pointing to a small building included in the wall which girdled the works.

"There certainly," said McFie, "seems to be a small light, from a candle or a lantern, moving about within that window on the upper floor under the tree."

"Yes!" exclaimed George. "That's the counting-house! And, by jingo! the light must be in my private room!"

With that he started off running towards the light, followed with labor by the philosopher. They had run to within a stone's-throw of the window when George again stopped short before something huddled against a bank.

"What's this?" he said, stooping.

"That'll be the creature's hat, or turban," said McFie.

"Good heavens! Daniel?" George put out his hand and touched the huddled thing. "No! Daniel's clothes! His turban"—turning them over—"and the rest. He can't have drowned himself?"

"Nay, nay, sir," crackled the philosopher. "Be sure his end will not be by water! Let us push on first, and see what that light may mean. Have you any means of getting in without going round to the lodge?"

"I have the key in my pocket," said George. "There is a private door in the wall."

So he ran to the door and put the key into the lock, while the philosopher stood a step or two off and watched the light. Almost as soon as the key sounded in the lock and the door opened, the light went out.

"It's gone!" exclaimed McFie. "The light's gone!"

"Stay there, and see," said George, "if anybody comes out."

McFie waited without in some trepidation—extremely doubtful whether he could tackle the midnight marauder who was certain to make a dash for escape—while George felt his way into the outer office, where he struck a match and lighted the gas (no one was to be seen), thence into the inner office and lighted the gas

(still no one to be seen), whence an iron corkscrew stair led up to his private room. He climbed the stair, and lit the gas there also. There was no one—no one to be seen secreted anywhere; but there was evidence that some one had been there, for he could not so far have forgotten himself as to leave drawers open, even if he had left them unlocked. He opened the window and called to McFie: had any one come out? Not a soul; not a creature, answered McFie. He left the gas burning throughout, and went to McFie.

"Now, Mr. McFie," said he, "I come to you for advice. I am sure we cannot both have been mistaken; we saw a light in that window. I enter and pass through all these rooms, and search them; I see, I find, nobody; and yet I am tolerably certain the drawers of my writing-table are not as I left them. What, in this crisis, do you, my father's old friend, advise me to do?"

"What do I advise, my dear young friend?" exclaimed McFie, loud enough for all the birds to hear. "I would advise you to find the head that should have been inside yon hat, or turban, we saw a few minutes ago."

"Daniel again!" said George. "Very well; let us find Daniel."

He locked the office door, and they both returned to the place where they had seen Daniel's clothes. When they reached it they saw, to their amazement, Daniel himself seated on the bank, completely clothed, all save his boots, which he was in the act of putting on.

"Where have you been, Daniel?" asked his master. "What have you been doing?"

"Been, Mister George? Been doing, sahib? With regard, I have been in the water of the little river what flow delightful, sweet, cool, etcetera, down there; oh yes! With regard again, a second time, I have caught two pretty fishes for the sahib's breakfast"—he showed a pair of trout lying near him; "so just the same time I put me into the water of the nice little river, because the water was sweet and cool, etcetera, and I was not. I wash me, and I put my clothes upon me again. And that, Mister George, is the whole story."

CHAPTER XVII

THE HISTORY OF A GREAT SUSPICION

To Isabel the early days of her father's sojourn with her were days of comparative rest and peace. A subdued zephyr of excitement, indeed, breathed through them, but they were devoid of anxiety and incident. Her father had been brought by Mr. Doughty, as she had arranged, and he had settled down with her readily and cheerfully. The first thing he had done on entering her sitting-room had been to run his eye over her book-shelves, and the next had been to sit down in her easy-chair with a book that was new to him; and thus he had continued. She had found a lodging for the faithful Doughty a door or two off, and he hung about the chief (in attendance or on guard) while she was absent at school. The first two days being Saturday and Sunday, she was able to be present herself pretty constantly. On Sunday evening she went to Rutland Gate (it had been arranged that she should dine there on Sundays, and she feared that if she intermitted the habit awkward questions might be asked), but she went with an even mind; for she left Mr. Ainsworth in conversation with her father, on the understanding that he would stay till her return. It was not, then, till Monday that her father had occasion to note her absence during the greater part of the day. On her return from school she found him disturbed.

"My dear child," said he, before she had well entered, "I cannot permit this! Alexander has told me that you go out teaching in a school every day; you mustn't do it any more, my dear! You understand, my dear," said he, taking her hands and looking tenderly on her, "that your father is going to provide for you; it is but right and proper that he should; it is a duty and a pleasure he has neglected too long."

"You are very good, father," said she; and for the moment she was as grateful as if his desire had been carried into act; "but I cannot give my teaching up at a moment's notice. I must go on for another term. You understand, don't you?"

He understood, and he assented; and thus she temporized.

But from that hour he began to be full of schemes of work. He discussed them with his daughter, he discussed them with Alexander, and he discussed them with Alan Ainsworth—discussed them with such eloquence, subtlety, and completeness that it seemed as if he must sit down at once in the heat of his subjects—but he always put off the writing till “to-morrow.”

“There, now,” said Ainsworth, one evening, when he was wrought to as great a pitch of interest as the expositor himself, “there you have material for at least three first-rate articles! Set to and write them, and I pledge myself to find a place for them. Make a start to-night.”

“Let us talk the subject out a little more thoroughly first,” said Mr. Raynor; “I’ll make a good beginning early in the morning when I’m alone.”

Thus the days slipped away; but Isabel, at least, was not disappointed, for she had built no hopes on her father’s promises of performance. Her father’s intentions were always of the best and noblest, and it was but a vice of the body, she told herself, become an iron habit that he could not give them effect. He was, of course, too clever a man not to be aware of his own weaknesses, and he had still too much conscience not to be bitten sometimes with a rage against himself. His rage was commonly impotent, but it was honestly felt. But in saying that much I am anticipating somewhat; for all the evidence he gave of self-contumely in those early days, when he was still fresh to the change in his surroundings, was in a certain conversation with his daughter.

“I am,” said he, suddenly, “a worthless wretch, my dear! I have no will—or, at least, I should say I *have* a will, but have lost the force to make it work. I do not mean to accuse myself of absolute idleness—no, no; that would not be fair to myself; and I have reasons enough for self-reproach without adding imaginary ones—but in all things that concern my moral feelings I have sunk into a strange apathy and cowardice. During all the years I have neglected you, my child, I have been filled with shame of myself; God knows not a day has passed but the thought of you has gnawed at my heart, and yet somehow I could do nothing! It seems amazing and preposterous, but there it is!”

“You are morbid, father dear,” said she. “You are not strong; but you will get stronger. Wait, and your will-power will come back.”

All these things Isabel laid up and pondered in her heart, with the result that she pitied him with the ungrudging, infinite pity of a strong woman, and was resolved more than ever to protect him with all the resources of her love. It was well for him that she was thus powerfully drawn to him early, for the bond that bound them was soon to be sorely tried. The trial came about in this wise.

Uncle Harry had been more disappointed than he could have imagined by Isabel's refusal to live with him. He admitted to himself that she had been quite sweet and reasonable about it, and that he really had no grievance; but yet he had been so long used to command and to be obeyed, to say to this man "come" and to that "go," and to find action follow in unhesitating consequence, that it chafed him to find the inclination and purpose of another running counter to his plans. So he brooded on her refusal, and turned over and over her reasons for it. Moreover, his many years' intercourse with wily Asiatics had made him very suspicious, and somewhat prone to put two and two together to make five. Isabel had made some singular admissions: she would have accepted his offer if it had been made a week, or even three days, before; she had in that time taken upon herself, or incurred, some responsibility of which she could not speak (and which, therefore, must be open to objection); and she clearly knew some one who, in plain words, was given to drink. What wonder is it that these strange confessions should coalesce in Uncle Harry's mind, accustomed to examine and deduce, into one coherent statement? Isabel had become entangled closely with some dissipated ne'er-do-well, whom in her generosity she was about to marry to save him from his vice! That is too common an event with women not to have seemed plausible even in the case of Isabel. Having got thus far, Uncle Harry became alarmed, and could not forbear to communicate his fears to Mr. Suffield.

"It's rank nonsense, Harry!" said Suffield. "As I've told you before, you've lived among those black fellows so long that you're as suspicious as a justice o' the peace!"

"It may be rank, George," said Uncle Harry, "but it's not nonsense. Look at the way the girl has lived the last few years—having the complete control of her own movements, and making what acquaintances she liked! Do you know what friends and acquaintances she may have made? No, of course you don't."

"I've never heard her speak of any, and she has always been a

frank, open girl, Harry. The only young man she knows and cares about, besides George, so far as I'm aware, is Alan Ainsworth; and, of course, he's out of this question."

"When did he tell you," asked Uncle Harry, "that he had come up to London? Come up earlier than he had intended—a day or two before my talk with Isabel, wasn't it? Her 'three days' would just cover that! That's a curious thing."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Suffield. "You actually imagine that Alan can be the man? But you don't know him. Harry, you're no better than a grand inquisitor!"

"I'm only inquisitorial," said Uncle Harry, slightly huffed, "in the interest of my niece and yours; and it might have been better if you had been more inquisitorial long ago." And he marched into the garden, where his tent was permanently pitched.

The excellent Suffield sat confused. If these things could be he would have to rearrange all his preconceptions of both men and women. He wondered, and then he began to doubt; and when an honest creature like him once begins to doubt, he doubts in a thorough, straightforward way characteristic only of himself, and by no means to be reckoned with. He turned immediately and wrote to Ainsworth that he would like to see him as soon as possible on an important matter. Ainsworth, of course, came on the summons, but yet Suffield had had time to go over his doubts, over and over again, till he had trodden them down almost as hard and fixed as beliefs. He received his young friend privately in the library.

"I call this my snuggery," said he, in a kind of parenthetical apology, "though there's nothing very snug about it, is there? I smoke a pipe here sometimes, but I don't seem to mix well wi' the wigged old chaps on the wall there," indicating certain severe portraits of past politicians and statesmen of the House of Padham. "They don't know me, and they appear to think I'm taking a deuce of a liberty in trying to make myself comfortable in their company, though the Lord knows I pay enough for it. Yes; I smoke a pipe and make my head swell wi' solid information out of Blue Books, but I'd rather be sitting by my own fireside wi' a long clay, having a good talk, as we used to do. But sit you down, Alan, my lad, and never mind the old chaps. By-the-way, my niece, Isabel, and you seemed to hit it off pretty well last time I saw you together. Have you seen anything of her, by chance, since you have come up to London?"

"Yes," answered Ainsworth, somewhat embarrassed; "I happened to meet her in the street." He thought that in saying so much he was admitting as much as was fair to Isabel.

"Well," said Suffield, after having mentally noted the admission, "and how are things going with you? Very busy, eh?"

He moved uneasily about the room while he spoke, and kept his eyes off Ainsworth.

"Yes, Mr. Suffield," answered the young man, "I'm fairly busy, and things are going on as well as can be expected, as the doctors say."

"You find no difficulty about settling down in London, I suppose. If you find any difficulty, come to me, you know—come to me. I'll be always glad to do whatever I can for you, as I've told you."

"You're very good, Mr. Suffield," said Ainsworth; "and I assure you, if I were in any difficulty, or if ever I may be in a difficulty, there is no one to whom I would more unreservedly come than to you."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, my lad," said Suffield, and considered his young friend's countenance a moment to observe signs of a rising confusion. But he saw none. "You see, my lad," he continued, "London's a place that makes a young fellow live always on the strain, like a man balancing himself on a tight-rope, or like a man I saw once on the Spa at Scarboro' that walked on a globe, and worked himself and his globe up and up on a narrow gangway, twisting round and round, to the top of a high pole. A young man like you that has to put his head into his work gets excited, gets over-excited maybe, wi' working over-time, till human nature won't stand it—unless the man's a horse—and says, 'No, no; you be damned! Let me rest a bit.' But the young man won't let his nature rest; he whips it up and jogs it on wi' stimulants. And then he comes a cropper, and is done for." Again he considered his young friend, but still he saw no signs of compunction, or even of self-consciousness. "I once knew," he continued, "a clever lad like yourself—a dear friend he was, and a kind of relation, which you are not—not yet." Upon that Ainsworth blushed, and Suffield thought, "Aha! there's something here!" "He was in the same line of work as you are in," said Suffield. "He was a very promising lad, and was getting on quite swimmingly when suddenly he went under."

"Dead?" asked Ainsworth, interested.

"No, my lad; shipwrecked! Lost — lost! It came suddenly to us, but not to him! He knew for a long time, though we didn't, that he was ruining himself and his family wi' his stimulants—not drink, but something quite as damnable to him!"

"What? Not opium?"

"Yes, my lad. Opium it was."

Then Ainsworth looked very conscious indeed; for now he was certain of what he had been for some moments dimly suspicious, that the old friend to whom Suffield alluded must be none other than Isabel's father. Suffield could not but note the change that passed upon him, and said to himself, "It must be opium with him, too! To think of such a thing!" Then the gentle, generous heart of the good man was suffused with pity and with the desire to save his young friend. There were tears in his voice, if not in his eyes, as he leaned towards Ainsworth and laid his hand on his arm.

"Alan, my lad," said he, "you must give it up, cost what it will. If it's living alone that tempts you to it, come and live wi' me; there's plenty of room in the house, and you can do your writing in here. Nobody will bother you, unless it be those old chaps of Padiham!"

What could Ainsworth do but look amazed and stammer, "But what do you mean? What's in your mind, Mr. Suffield? There's something the matter with you or with me! There's a misunderstanding, really and truly, on my side or on yours!"

Suffield leaned back in his chair and considered him.

"Do you mean to tell me, Alan, that you can't guess what I'm driving at?"

"Not in the least," answered Alan, "I assure you, Mr. Suffield. You appear to think that I have become an opium-smoker, or something of the kind. It's a completely mad notion, and if anybody else but yourself had it, Mr. Suffield, I should say he was either insane or spiteful. I can't think you're either the one or the other; you must have some good reason for speaking as you've spoken. Tell me what it is."

"Well, now, then, I'll be frank with you, my lad," said Suffield. "I have it on the very best authority — an authority, mind you, there's no doubt about at all — that my niece, Isabel Raynor, has within the last week or so got entangled wi' some man who has the habit of taking drink, or some other stimulant—got so entangled that she feels responsible for him."

Ainsworth rose and laughed aloud — a laugh not of merriment, but partly of bitterness, partly of embarrassment — and paced to and fro as he laughed.

“And so,” he said, “you thought that this man must be me!”

“Well, you see,” said Suffield, somewhat feebly, “I knew no man but you that she seemed in the least interested in; and then your coming up to London fitted in with the time of this, and you admit that you’ve seen her.”

“And my having taken to drink or some stimulant, and my entangling her somehow seemed matters of course that needed neither discussion nor inquiry! ‘Pon my word,” exclaimed the young man, “it is the prettiest chain of evidence I ever heard of! It is worthy of a circumstantial case at the Old Bailey! It is wonderful to consider the crimes one’s friends may believe one capable of!”

“Not crimes, my lad,” pleaded Suffield, now put out and humbled. “But there; I see I’m wrong. I confess it.”

“Mr. Suffield,” said Alan, stopping before him and laying his hand on his shoulder, “I couldn’t love you and respect you more if you were my father; you are the best and most generous-tempered man I know—”

“No, no, Alan!”

“But you are. And I can’t believe you ever would have thought these things of me yourself; they must have been suggested to you by some one else.”

“Still,” said Suffield, “I’m responsible, my lad, and I beg your pardon.” (Ainsworth grasped his hand.) “I see *you* can’t be the man. But who the dickens can he be? Her Uncle Harry and I are very much worried about it.”

“Oh, Uncle Harry!” exclaimed Ainsworth. “Don’t you think, Mr. Suffield, it would be best if you and Uncle Harry went and put the question to Miss Raynor herself?”

“Perhaps it would—perhaps it would.”

“Now,” said Ainsworth, looking at his watch, “my time is up.”

“Well, Alan, my lad,” said Suffield, holding his hand, “you forgive my blundering idiocy.”

“It’s not a question of forgiveness between you and me, Mr. Suffield,” said Alan; “it’s a question merely of understanding.”

“Say no more, my lad; say no more. I’m just an ass. I was almost forgetting; I want you to come and dine, to meet some people—political nobs, and that sort of thing. But I’ll drop you a line when it’s fixed.”

So Ainsworth went, and Suffield, as he heard the street door close, said to himself, "What a nice, clever lad he is! Now I must just find that Harry!"

Of course Suffield went and reported this singular interview to Uncle Harry; and Ainsworth, as much as he thought prudent or necessary, to Isabel, with results which shall appear.

Ainsworth, in sum, merely led Isabel to suppose that her Uncle Harry suspected she had taken her father under her wing, and had communicated his suspicion to her other uncle; and therefore Isabel, somewhat nettled and angry that her uncle could not contain a secret, was careful to keep her father as much secluded as possible at such times as her uncle might call, and when he did call she was more reserved with him than had been her wont.

The two uncles hesitated to make up their minds to inquire directly of Isabel herself, as Ainsworth had suggested, and as was manifestly proper, concerning this matter that vexed them. They both knew her (Mr. Suffield especially) to be a young lady of spirit, and they feared she might deeply resent, not so much their interference as the inferential suspicion that she could be doing aught but right. But it came about within a week that they felt they could put the question off no longer. Uncle Harry had called twice, and each time he had returned to report to Suffield his serious impression that the mysterious person with whom Isabel was entangled was living in the house with her! He (Uncle Harry) had been delayed before he had been admitted; the landlady had seemed flustered; and there was lurking by the fender-corner a pair of slippers that were obviously too large for Isabel's own feet! Suffield had pooh-poohed that report the first time it was made, but when it was repeated he resolved to find out the truth of the matter at once. Uncle Harry had called on Isabel about tea-time; after dinner he and Suffield set out to call on her again, leaving Mrs. Suffield to suppose that they were going down to the House of Commons together.

Isabel and her father sat at supper. Isabel was at ease, for she expected no visitor, unless Ainsworth or Doughty should come in before bedtime; and her father was in the serenest of moods, for he had that day written a review of a book which Ainsworth had brought him. They sat thus, talking of books and interested in their talk—for Isabel found her father's remarks acute and skilled, and her father found hers fresh and unconventional—when there came a knock at the street door, and an instant or two after the sit-

ting-room door was opened, and in stepped her two uncles. Her father sat facing the door, and her uncles stopped as soon as they had entered, with their eyes fixed on him.

"Oh," said Uncle Harry, and there was a note of suppressed anger and contempt in his voice, which at once roused Isabel's spirit, "it's you, is it?"

Her father did not answer, but he glanced at Isabel, as in surprise and reproach, as if he would say: "Have *you* done this? Have *you* brought these terrible men down on me?" Isabel rose and placed chairs for her uncles.

"Won't you sit down, both of you?" she said.

Uncle George shook his head sadly; his usually ruddy tint had sunk into a purplish gray. Uncle Harry paid no heed to her words; he was pale as death, the pupils of his eyes seemed reduced to glittering pin-points, and his hands trembled. Seeing them all standing, John Raynor rose, too, apparently out of the merest instinct of politeness; he stood nearly a head taller than his brother. It was clear there was no lack of recognition on either side.

"It is a very long time since we have met, Harry," said John, holding out his hand.

"Yes," said Harry, disregarding the proffered hand, "it is twenty-five years. And once again it is the cause of a woman that brings us together."

On hearing that Isabel started and turned, and met her father's pleading eyes, which seemed to ask, "What does this mean?"

"What are you doing here?" asked Harry, with his eyes still fixed on his brother. "What mischief have you done, or are you contriving? You are my brother! It is wonderful. And—God forgive me—I hate you more than any living thing!"

"Uncle Harry, Uncle Harry!" cried Isabel. "What has come to you that you say such horrible things? Why don't you sit down and talk quietly, and be friendly with us? You are brothers—sons of the same parents. Are you not ashamed that a brother should speak so bitterly, and feel so bitterly, to a brother?"

"No; I am not!" answered Uncle Harry. His glance lighted on her an instant, and then returned to his brother.

"You don't know what used to be between them, my dear," said Suffield in Isabel's ear. "It always drives Harry mad when he thinks of it!"

"You took my wife from me!" continued Uncle Harry to his brother.

"Not your wife, Harry," said Suffield, laying his hand on his shoulder with a kindly grasp; "your sweetheart only. Come; be just if you can't be reasonable."

"She had promised to be my wife, and she would have been!" said Harry, without turning his head. "You took my wife," he continued, "and now you take your daughter—*her* daughter!"

John Raynor had listened to him, standing half-dazed with his hands crossed before him. He now stepped forward again with his hand out.

"Is there never to be an end," he asked, "of that subject—that unfortunate subject—between us, Harry?"

"Why are you here?" continued Harry. "Are you come to ruin and kill her daughter, as you ruined and killed her?"

John Raynor sat down and dully listened, while his hand clutched aimlessly at the table; he was deathly pale, and his lips and his limbs were twitching convulsively. His daughter came to his relief, and stood behind him with her hands on his shoulders.

"Uncle," she said, quietly, but with a vibration of anger in her voice, "you must not talk like that! I have let you go on too long! I am responsible for my father being here! I brought him to live with me, and I know what I am doing!"

"You do not! You do not, foolish girl!" cried her uncle. "He will insinuate himself into your confidence! He will flatter you into the belief that you are the very cleverest woman in all this world! And all the time he will torture your mind and soul with hopes of great things—hopes which never will be fulfilled! And he will live upon you!—live upon you! What is it that women find in him? *She* was infatuated as you are! I was preparing to give her all I had when he came with nothing in his hand, and yet she put her hand in his and went away with him—to poverty and death! I am ready to give you all I have; but no: he comes, not to give, but to take, and you receive him with open arms!"

"It won't do, my dear!" said Isabel's father, starting to his feet suddenly. "I mustn't do that! I must go away! I must go away at once! I'll go to Alexander! Where are my boots? Will you be so good as to ask for my boots, my dear?"

"Uncle Harry, you must go away!" said Isabel, with her hand firmly clasped on her father's wrist. "Go away, please! Take him away, Uncle George!"

Before he went Uncle George came to John Raynor with a

peculiar mellowness of both voice and eyes, and took him by the hand.

"Well, John," said he, "let by-gones be by-gones; and be a good man. You've got a dear daughter there—as good a girl as ever was. I'll see you again soon."

He took Uncle Harry's arm, who put his hand to his head and then to his heart, and walked away with him submissively and in silence.

That night Uncle Harry sent out a telegram to his nephew:
"*Send me Daniel at once for a few weeks.*"

CHAPTER XVIII

UNCLE HARRY STRIKES HIS TENT

THAT was the beginning of Isabel's trials. With great difficulty she assuaged her father's disordered emotions, and with Alexander's help (who had come in soon after the uncles had gone) she prevailed on him to go to bed; but for hours after he had retired she heard him pacing to and fro overhead. Next day when she returned from school her father was gone! And she soon discovered that Doughty was gone, too! She was debating with herself what she should do—whether she should not go directly to Alan Ainsworth and solicit his help to bring her father back—when Alan himself walked in. In the fulness of her heart Isabel told him all the story of her trouble, with what she guessed of the old relations between her father and his brother, and the painful scene of the evening before. Ainsworth was deeply interested; the hatred which the one brother bore the other, and had borne for many years, struck him as something ancient, peculiar, and literary.

"It has often been said," he observed, "that there is no hatred so bitter, constant, and deadly as the hatred of brethren."

"Yes," said Isabel. "And in literature it may appear a great and romantic passion; but when you see it before your eyes, and hear it with your ears—oh!—it strikes you with shame and horror! And yet when I think of poor Uncle Harry's life, and all he has endured, I can feel only pity for him! Does it not seem dreadful," she added, mainly to herself, "that women with the best intentions should only cause division between men like these!"

"It always has been so," said Ainsworth, philosophically (for he did not feel a victim himself), "and I suppose it always will be. Since a woman can be the wife of only one man, the more desirable she is the more inevitable it is that there should be rival claimants for her, and the more likely there should be divisions, and, perhaps, hatreds."

"I suppose it must be so," said Isabel, considering him an instant; "but it is none the less pitiful and dreadful."

The pity and the dread of it she felt so much that, when she had given Alan instructions where to seek her father and had seen him set off to carry them out, she herself set out for Rutland Gate. She was sorry for her uncle from the bottom of her heart, now that she had had revealed to her the grievance which he had nursed during his long, long years of loneliness and exile. She completely comprehended how it had all come about: her mother in two minds between the two brothers; admiring, respecting, and liking the one who first asked for her love, but yet irresistibly drawn and captivated by the charm of the other, who, as it were, suddenly caught her up and carried her off. Not one of the three could she find it in her to blame: not her mother (whose case she was beginning to suspect might become her own any day); not her father, who, loving a woman and perceiving she loved him, resolved to take all risks and marry her; and certainly not her uncle, who had been faithful to her mother's memory, and who had made his disappointment life-long. Her uncle had been so constituted that he had suffered most, and therefore she would carry to him all her pity; but at the same time she would say to him, "See; there was no one truly to blame. And it is all past; let it be forgiven, and let yourself and my father be friends, as she would have desired whose memory you cherish."

When the door of the house at Rutland Gate was opened to her she asked to see Mr. Raynor. The responsible gentleman in black who opened the door told her in confidence (all domestics and others of inferior station were inclined to be communicative to Isabel) that her uncle was in his room packing up.

"Packing up! I suppose I may venture to disturb him?"

The domestic answered that if she would wait a moment he would himself inquire. He returned with speed and asked her to "walk up." Her uncle received her at the door of his room with a polite constraint.

"You are not going away, are you, uncle?" she asked, with deep concern.

"I am, my dear," he answered, pressing her hand.

"Abroad again?"

"No; not abroad. I think I have explored foreign countries enough. I am now going to explore my own country. I am going on a riding or driving tour for two or three months."

"Months!" she exclaimed.

"That's why I must take some luggage. I shall send it on by train from point to point."

He was turning away to resume his packing, but she retained his hand and kept him before her.

"Going away," she said, "because of this little trouble of last night, and without a word of forgiveness and friendliness! Oh, uncle, is that worthy of you?"

"My dear child," said he, "for the trouble of last night I ask your pardon. I forgot myself shamefully."

"You know, uncle," said she, "it is not that I mean. The pain I felt is a small matter; the great thing is the pain you gave my father. Have you no word of forgiveness for him?"

"I forgive him, my dear! I forgive him!" said he, and forcibly withdrew his hand. "But I wish to forget him. I wish to see him no more, and to hear of him no more. He does not need me; he has you."

"The scene of last night has completely unsettled him again," said Isabel, "and driven him away. When I returned from school he was gone."

"Gone, is he? That should prove a good thing for you."

"But I will find him again and bring him back. Do you imagine, uncle, I am so easily turned aside from a purpose as that? He is worth saving from his besetting weakness, and I shall devote myself to saving him."

"Very well," said he, when he had considered her a moment; "you do not ask my advice, and I do not give it."

"But, dear uncle," said she, "you are not in a condition of mind to give advice; you are biased. I think of you both with much the same feeling. Why will you not let me love you both? Is that a great thing to ask? Why will you not think with me about my father, and be friendly and helpful with him?"

"Because I cannot. You are a good girl, and you mean well; but really, my dear, I must ask you—beg of you—to drop the subject. Your father has, let us say, a habit of conduct of many years' standing, and of which he will not for a long time, if ever, be broken; I have a habit of feeling, let us say, of which I will not for a long time, if ever, be broken. Let us say no more about it."

She considered. Her uncle's words seemed reasonable; it might be well to leave the softening of his heart to the influence of Time—at least, to wait for the effect of two or three months' absence and

loneliness on him, and of two or three months' love and supervision on her father. Cast down, but not in despair, she said "good-bye" to her uncle, and wished him health and peace on his journey; and so she left him.

As she descended the stairs she wondered whether it would not be proper to see her aunt, perhaps, before she left the house. A decision was anticipated by the opening of a door and the appearance of her aunt's maid; for Mrs. Suffield now had a maid all to herself, "and everything grand and becoming about her."

"Please, Miss Raynor," said the maid, "Mrs. Suffield says will you step in and speak to her a moment?"

Mrs. Suffield sat before a cheval-glass; she was dressing. As her niece entered she rose to turn herself and to view by the aid of a hand-glass the manner of her hair in the tall mirror; and Isabel was compelled to think that her aunt was a very handsome woman in spite of her fifty years or so.

"I think I can manage by myself now, Wilkins," said she to her maid. "Miss Raynor will help me with my dress."

"Very well, ma'am," said Wilkins. "But I hope you will get your *busk* nicely arranged, for not many ladies as I've dressed has such a fine *busk* as you, ma'am." (The devoted but incorrect creature obviously meant "bust.")

"I'll see to it, Wilkins," said Mrs. Suffield; "don't be anxious." And Wilkins withdrew. "So you've been to see your uncle in private, Bel, before he goes."

"Yes, aunt," said Isabel; "I came to see him specially, though I did not know he was going."

"Going! Yes; of course he's going! What else did you expect after the way *you've* been going?"

"I, aunt? I suppose you allude to what I've done about my father?"

"I suppose I do, my dear. You don't know your uncle, and you think you know your father. You've thrown your uncle over, and taken up with your father—a very natural thing to do, I dare say; he always had a way with women. But you've spoiled yourself; your uncle meant to set up house and to make you mistress of it, and, I believe, to make you his heir. You were always absurdly quixotic, Bel; but I suppose you never really thought of the chances you were throwing away."

"Oh yes, aunt," said Isabel; "I knew all these things."

Her aunt turned on her a penetrating, business-like gaze.

"You knew them?" she said.

"I knew them, or guessed them," said Isabel, carelessly.

"And you chose the better part—your father? Well, upon my word! The girl's a constant wonder to me! And where or how, may I ask, did you find your father?"

"I had rather keep that to myself, if you please, aunt."

"Oh, very well," said her aunt. "Of course, it's no business of mine. You'll go your own way, Bel, as usual. Lace this thing for me, will you, my dear? It laces at the back."

Had it been her aunt's face Isabel was close to the next few seconds, and not her back hair, the conversation might have had a gentler and more generous end. But they were both so much akin in temper that each rather repelled than attracted the other, for the most part, and neither would sue to the other for a better understanding.

"It seems to me, aunt," said Isabel, "exceedingly harsh and unkind of you to speak like this of what concerns your brother."

"Which brother, my dear?" said her aunt. "I have two brothers: of whom I prefer the one, and you prefer the other."

"He needs my preference!" exclaimed Isabel. "He has no one but me!"

"That's entirely his own fault," said her aunt. "But he *has* you, and having you he has a great deal; I will say that for you."

"But why are you so terribly wanting in consideration and love for him?"

"Am I so wanting?" said her aunt; and an ancient fount of feeling seemed to rise within her. "It must be, then, I suppose, because he was so wanting in consideration and love for me. He never had any love or regard for any one but himself. He would always take, but never give. He was all self; he was self-conceited, self-satisfied, self-willed, self-sufficient, self-indulgent, self-opinioned, and self-*ish*."

"And now," retorted her niece, "it is self-evident that he is self-reproved, self-abased, self-tormented, self-destructive, and self-neglectful; he is scarcely conscious of himself at all now."

Her aunt waited a moment before she replied: "I wish him no harm—only good; but I wish he would not always depend for his good on some one else than himself. I am afraid you are going to spoil your life for him; and he'll let you do it."

"But if it gives me pleasure to spend my life for him, aunt?" said Isabel.

"Then I've nothing more to say. You are of age, my dear, and responsible for your actions. We shall be pleased to see you just as usual, though I suppose your father won't care to come often. And I dare say his dreadful habit keeps him sometimes from being quite presentable. There are some people, for instance, coming to dinner to-night — Lord Clitheroe and other political friends of your uncle ; I would have liked to ask you and your father, but really I hesitated."

"I don't think father would have cared to come," said Isabel, scarcely knowing whether it was anger or tears she felt she must restrain. "He is not in the least interested in politics, and he laughs at the folly of people who give themselves up to politics. He is chiefly interested in Literature and Art ; and he talks well and writes well about both."

"Oh, indeed !" said her aunt, in a tone distinctly final. "Well, my dear, come when you will. It's about time I went down. Good-bye."

Isabel departed not only in disappointment, but in vexation and wrath. She had desired as their talk had progressed to say many bitter and biting things to her aunt, but she had restrained herself, partly out of inured respect for her aunt, and partly out of the hope that it might thus be better for her father ; now she thought she had restrained herself in vain. Her aunt seemed all the more contemptuous of her father, because of the measured way she had spoken of him ! How cruelly both her uncle and her aunt had spoken of her father, and how little they seemed to care whether he fared well or ill ! What a strange thing was family love—liker family hate ! Could it be that that kind of indifference affected some families more than others ?

Thus her thoughts tossed to and fro like a wind-swept pool ; and the end of her cogitations was that she felt more closely identified with her father than ever, and more resolutely determined to strengthen and build him up so that no one would venture to speak of him save with respect. And thus she found her way back to her lodgings, and sat till the darkness closed round her, waiting for the return of her father—who did not come.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE OPIUM-DEN AGAIN

ALAN AINSWORTH had not gone far in search of Mr. Raynor—no farther, indeed, than two or three turnings beyond Isabel's lodgings—before he reflected that he had no exact information to guide him. Isabel had been able only to tell him that her father had gone, probably, to the opium-den which was in a horrible lane off the Ratcliffe Highway; but he might, on the other hand, have gone somewhere with Doughty, since Doughty, too, was missing. Doughty, moreover, knew the way to the opium-den; Ainsworth, therefore, concluded it better to seek Doughty first. He thought he knew where he might lay his hand on him; for that ancient and astute Bardolph of journalism had, during their short acquaintance, given him the privilege of several private and peculiar conversations, in which he had spoken of many of his lonely ways and shady haunts. From these conversations Ainsworth had gathered that Doughty, whenever he was depressed or in trouble, low in spirits or in pocket (both of which were conditions frequently recurrent), acted on Dr. Johnson's saying: "*Let us take a walk down Fleet Street.*" Ainsworth, therefore, took a hansom to Temple Bar, and walked down Fleet Street, looking in at several well-known houses of call by the way. At a certain ancient and mouldy place of refreshment, in a turning off the eastern end of the street, where many generations of roysterers and steady drinkers had heard "the chimes at midnight" from the steeple close by, he found his man. Doughty sat with a crony in a remote corner of a long, low room, in which were a good many steady toppers. Ainsworth was some little while beside them before they were aware of his presence. Doughty seemed in his most solemn and portentous mood.

"Francis," he was saying, "I could find it in me to do a big drink."

"So could I, Alexander," said the other; "but how is it to be achieved?"

"I have it, Francis," answered Doughty, after a moment's thought: "by a tremendous pop!"

"Of what, Alexander?" demanded the other.

Ainsworth thought he had overheard enough, and tapped Doughty on the shoulder. Doughty turned, shook him by the hand in a manner most impressive and protracted, and invited him to sit down.

"I cannot stay," said Ainsworth. "I am on my way to find your chief, and I want you to help me."

"I will help you, Mr. Ainsworth," said Doughty, "when I have had a toothful of refreshment. Will you kindly call for a biscuit and something to help it down?"

"Did you know that your chief was gone off?" asked Ainsworth.

"Know? Does the jackal know when the lion is on the war-path? Most certainly I knew. It was that knowledge that drove me forth to wander like a maniac among the tombs. It was the thought of what his admirable and adorable daughter, Miss Raynor, might think of me that drove me thus far. This is not a fit place, Mr. Ainsworth, in which to mention her noble Christian name; but I murmur it with infinite respect." After a moment's pause he continued: "He eluded me. When he is bent on it, he can elude even me, and I have been with him for a countless number of years, and I have studied him, and I know him and his capacities through and through; and I venture to tell you, Mr. Ainsworth, that the chief could write the whole *Encyclopædia Britannica* himself if he liked—"

"And if he had the time," added Ainsworth.

—"and if he had the time," solemnly repeated Doughty. "But I do not stand in any awe of him. We have been like brothers for a countless number of years. It is of Miss Raynor I stand in awe; she makes me ashamed; she makes me think of Una and the lion (of course you are aware, Mr. Ainsworth, that I am alluding to a certain passage in Spenser, the poets' poet). How can I ever look her in the face again?"

He took off his hat, looked into it desperately, and sadly put it on again. The refreshment was brought, and Doughty at once made the lighter part of it disappear. The crony (who seemed to be to Doughty much what Souther Johnny was to Tam o' Shanter) then observed, aside, to Ainsworth, that Doughty was wonderful; the more refreshment he took the soberer and steadier

he became! As if to prove that saying true, Doughty rose, breaking his biscuit, and declared to Ainsworth that he was ready; and forth they both marched.

Doughty was of solemn opinion that the chief would be in "the thick" of his opium-sleep, and that it might be as well to wait until he was likely to have it out; but Ainsworth represented that he had promised Miss Raynor to find and bring home her father with all possible speed, and that she would be anxiously waiting for his return. Upon that Doughty acquiesced, and in his most portentous manner called a four-wheeler; and they rumbled and rattled away eastward, through a region that was as yet little known to Ainsworth.

The cab was left, as on a former occasion, near the top of the noisome lane, and they went on on foot, pursued by the curious looks of the policeman on "fixed-point duty." Doughty led the way on and into the den, and Ainsworth followed, with his attention at its utmost stretch, for this expedition was the most novel and romantic he had ever engaged on. The singular literary reputation of opium had hold of him, of course, but he was conscious of very little falling off in the realization of what his fancy had expected: the sickly-sweet fumes of the opium were so peculiar to the sense, and all objects seen through the brown haze—swimming, writhing, and rolling—took such strange, soft, and distant shapes. He was startled by the sudden evolvment from the smoke (as if he were the genie of the place) of the grinning, slant-eyed Chinaman. He, manifestly, recognized Doughty, and knew his errand. He beckoned them, without a word, down the room, and pointed with a bow to a figure spread out on a mattress, with an opium-pipe between the fingers; it was the chief. Ainsworth, on recognizing him, at once stepped forward and shook him to wake him.

"No, no, no!" cried the Chinaman, frowning and gesticulating. "Him muchee sleepee! No good!"

But the shake had a certain effect: the chief opened his eyes for an instant, and then took another position. He turned on his side, with his knees drawn up and his head thrown back. He smiled, and murmured:

"Raynor of gold and jewels,
Raynor of silver and pearls;
Raynor of red,
Raynor of white,
Raynor of coral and ivory!"

And then he slid away again into complete silence and slumber. The words made an impression on Ainsworth. They haunted him ever after; they had such a musical cadence that one was tempted to find them charged with meaning; and yet they were but nonsense, with the faintest possibility of sense—a bit of poetic dross touched with gold.

"You perceive," said Doughty, "that it is of no use attempting to get him away now. We must patiently wait. In the meantime we must see that he gets no more opium from Johnny Chinaman when he wakes; and I think I had better go and send the cab away; it will run into a great deal of money to keep it waiting."

"I think, however," said Ainsworth, "it had better wait."

"Then," said Doughty, "we had better give the cabman a trifle for refreshment. I have no change; can you oblige, Mr. Ainsworth?"

Ainsworth quite understood the remoter purpose of this suggestion, but he had not the heart or the hardihood to refuse to accede to it; so Doughty went out with a silver coin. At the end of half an hour he had not returned, but the chief still slept on. Johnny Chinaman came and made the proffer of an opium-pipe, but Ainsworth declined it; at another time, alone, he thought he might not be indisposed to try the experiment; but now, when he had undertaken a sacred duty, he could not. So he sat on a stool and waited till he became drowsy, and then he rose and walked up and down.

In one of his walks he paused and listened to the soft, disjointed murmurs of a sleeper. The voice sounded to him like one he had heard before—where, he could not remember. The voice first arrested his attention, but the things uttered gradually held it.

"Observe," said the voice, "the time that is proper and the season actually of the thing. . . . He will be a great sinner to look for the ripeness of business and articles in *Pauguni*, and to have expectation of the fruit to drop in Chittarai. . . . I appear as a gentle cow, but to tell the truth with regards I am a hungry tiger. . . . Wait, wait, Daniel! With regard, be as the hungry beast in the jungle! . . . The young sahib is like the blind man who has thrown his staff into the air; oh yes, very; he is playing the part of the foolish person and son. . . . *Venkaiyam karuvéppilai!*" . . .

Ainsworth went near, and had his suspicion confirmed; he recognized the words and the person as those of Daniel Trichinopoly. But he gazed and wondered. The sleek and gentle Daniel now

looked no better than a truculent lascar or cooly: his turban was off, and disclosed a bare-shaven head; his clothes were gone (all except a loin-cloth), and revealed a brown figure of incredible thinness and wiriness; but he wore a most ferocious frown. Ainsworth did not understand the foreign words that he used occasionally; but he remembered them, and discovered afterwards that they were Tamil. He did not turn away, but still listened; for he did not doubt that "the young sahib" was George Suffield, and that in some crafty, underground, Oriental way Daniel was devising mischief against him, if not against the House of Suffield.

"*Venkaiyam! karuvéppilai!*" repeated Daniel (that is, onions! curry-leaves!). "No, no; Daniel will make curry not any more, thank you, sahib. Daniel in soon time will have plenty cash. . . . The young sahib is the foolish person. . . . He makes with regard, plenty too much noise. . . . Daniel! Daniel! All right, Daniel" (that in imitation of a loud manner; then sinking into his own low, oily tones). . . . "Oh yes; all right, Daniel! With regard, Daniel knows, Daniel smiles, Daniel laughs in the trouser of his arm . . . and Daniel waits. . . . Why, O daughter of my people, do you cry there for kanji? . . . Wait, and in the soon time I fly to you as the wind, and you have plenty kanji and cash! . . . Yes, indeed, and very truly. But even the wizard Tummabbipattan himself was caught at last—yes, although he turned and escaped here and there! . . . The Black Water! . . . Oh, the Black Water rushes! Oh, the Black Water goes over! . . . Oh, the Red Fire! . . . It burns! It burns up! . . . Oh!" he yelled, "I drown! I roast! I burn!"

With a final yell he bounded out upon the floor with fiery, rolling eyeballs, and dashed his hand as if to his sash to clutch a weapon. In an instant the Chinaman was between the opium-smitten Daniel and Ainsworth.

"London-man, you stand too muchee near," said he, putting Ainsworth back with a frown. "Velly good no kniffee! Johnny alway takee kniffee 'way!"

Johnny took his panting, trembling patient by the hand, led him back to his place, and helped him into his bunk; and Ainsworth returned to look at Mr. Raynor. What he had heard, wandering and disjointed as it was, made a deep impression on him, and the concluding tableau gave him a significant lesson in racial characteristics. "However smooth and civilized," said he to himself, "the Asiatic may appear, scratch him and you find the savage!"

The chief still slept on, murmuring at intervals soft, musical nothings to himself, his gentle condition under the opium being in marked contrast with that of the truculent Daniel. Ainsworth sat on the stool and wearily waited. No Doughty came; but opium-devotees (chiefly swarthy lascars or sallow and bilious-seeming Chinamen) slipped in and out silently like ghosts. With much ado Ainsworth kept awake, for he feared to drop asleep; he knew not what might befall him if he lost consciousness: the Chinaman passed silently now and then and cast an evil, slanting eye on him, and he knew that most of the occupants of the brown Hades must be, when awake, ruffians of the most unscrupulous and desperate character. A strange company, indeed, for the gentle, cultured John Raynor to choose to frequent.

One hour, two hours passed. Still the chief slept on; and still Doughty did not return. Three hours passed, and Ainsworth became very anxious; the time was creeping close to midnight, and Isabel, he knew, was waiting in the extremest uncertainty. He had a mind to attempt again to arouse Mr. Raynor. But presently Mr. Raynor relieved him by waking and calling softly for "Johnny" and "more." Ainsworth stepped quickly over to him.

"Mr. Raynor," said he, "don't you think it is time you came home?"

"Home?" echoed Mr. Raynor, and shook himself and looked at Ainsworth. "Oh," said he, "Mr. Ainsworth! Here? I hope you don't come here often! Dreadful! dreadful!"

"I have only come here for you, Mr. Raynor," said Ainsworth; "I have a cab waiting for you. Come, and we can talk by the way."

At that Johnny Chinaman came up, and Mr. Raynor endeavored to give orders for further pipes, but Ainsworth kept saying, "No, no, no!"

"Permit me," said Mr. Raynor. "I will not—I cannot—be dictated to in this manner. But I have a regard for you, Mr. Ainsworth; and when I have had one more pipe to steady my nerves—I need positively one pipe more; I know myself completely—then I'll come with you."

How the matter might have ended there is no saying had not Doughty appeared. In his presence the chief collapsed, half-sulkily, and permitted himself to be led away without a word, much to Ainsworth's amazement, till he considered that the persistent subjection at such a time of Mr. Raynor to the one man he

knew of unconquerable nerves must have become an ingrained habit.

So the erring father was recovered, and borne home in the waiting four-wheeler to his waiting daughter. He hung his head before her, smiled a sickly smile when she tried to rally him into cheerfulness, as if nothing had happened, declined to eat any supper, and went to bed, escorted by the faithful, silent, and penitent Doughty.

Then Ainsworth told Isabel of all his adventures and experiences, by no means omitting that one which had most impressed him: how he had seen and overheard Daniel Trichinopoly. They agreed that though all he had heard might have no more meaning than the wandering of one lunatic or fever stricken, it had at least that meaning, and it seemed likely that there was sufficient behind it to take note of. They agreed also that Mr. Suffield should not be troubled with this matter, since they both had plainly understood that the control of the mills and the Lancashire business in general were now committed entirely to George; but that it should be communicated to "the young sahib" himself, who had engaged Daniel, to make what he could of.

Therefore, when Ainsworth returned to his rooms a little later, he sat down and wrote to George Suffield. He said that certain business had taken him to an opium-den in the East End, where he discovered Daniel Trichinopoly, the Indian or Cingalese person who, he understood, now enjoyed some position in the House of Suffield. He then related the curious things which he had overheard, and left it to George to judge of their consequence.

CHAPTER XX

LOVE AFFAIRS, AND STARTLING NEWS

DAYS and weeks passed while Isabel was enduring her probation of trial with her father. She had thought it well to ignore his first escapade. She conversed with him and discussed with him, she cheered and sustained him, as if the painful evening with Uncle Harry and the day following had never been. And her father (for a time) showed his gratitude in his own way: he was soothed and encouraged, and he set himself with alacrity to plan assiduous occupation for his pen. And he really did accomplish some work which Ainsworth brought him to do from the office of *The Evening Banner*. But the slightest additional touch of excitement would send him off to the opium-den, whence he would be brought back by Doughty or Ainsworth, or both, in shame and despair. Isabel bore patiently with these sudden declensions, recognizing that it was not to be expected that her father could recover a firm footing in life except gradually. She forbore to reproach him; she still surrounded him with all her love; and he was passionately grateful, and became more and more cheerful and settled. When his craving was absent the days passed pleasantly, with some amount of performance and a great deal of promise, and with much delightful talk, in which Ainsworth joined (and sometimes Doughty), about books and authors, plays and players, and the interests of the world at large. One special flash of delight Isabel had at that time which affected her happily for many days: she received a gentle, kindly letter from Uncle Harry, admitting he had behaved ill, and hoping that pleasant relations would be resumed on his return.

The days had become hot and long, and in the cool of the evening they frequently walked in Regent's Park. The vacation-taking world were beginning to think with longing of the plangent margin of the cool sea-shore, of the green of fields and forests, and of the breeze and bloom of mountain and moor. Even Isabel was looking forward to a holiday with her father when the month was run

out; but Ainsworth had no change of that kind in prospect. He was just beginning to "find his feet" in London, and to "know his way about" (two excellent and expressive phrases), and he must continue without present hope of intermission to beat the hot pavements of the Strand and Fleet Street; for it would be a thing unheard of that a journalist so new to his task should so much as desire a vacation for two or three years. Ainsworth, therefore, when once he had been in the Park, affected to make much of its fresh air, the shade of its trees, and the coolness and sparkle of its ornamental waters. When he looked in of an evening, he became increasingly urgent that they should seek these delights, and as often as possible solicitous that Doughty should be of the company.

The deep design of these expeditions of three or, by preference, four, if dimly perceived, might never have been openly expressed had it not been for Euphemia Suffield. That young lady, finding that she saw less than she had been wont of her dear Cousin Isabel, and hearing that her cousin was now much engrossed with her newly-found father, came more than once to the Marylebone lodgings, encouraged thereto by the kindly Suffield himself. She had also another reason for calling on her cousin — a particularly family and feminine reason: she had never heard any but the most discreetly veiled allusions to Isabel's father, she had always believed he must be a very wicked man, and now she was exceedingly curious to see with her own bright eyes and to hear with her own shrewd ears what manner of man he really was.

Mrs. Suffield had well said to Isabel that her father had "a way with women." His manner was to all gentle and suave, but when he addressed a woman his voice unconsciously slipped into a softer, deeper tone than usual, as if he were anxious for her sympathy; and in whatever company he was the entrance of a woman would always provoke an evident gush of emotion. So bright and pretty a girl as Euphemia (and his own relation, too) was not the least likely to call forth these characteristics in him. He let his eyes dwell on her with the tenderest interest and approval, and he praised her dresses, he listened with delight to her prattle, he recited soft, musical verses to her, and he talked to her very wisely, but not to weariness, of serious matters of life and love. The inevitable result was that Euphemia considered him charming beyond any charm she had ever believed possible in man.

"Oh, Bel!" she exclaimed to her cousin, "why haven't we known Uncle John before?"

"Do you like him?" asked Isabel, with simple pleasure.

"Like him!" exclaimed Euphemia. "I should think I do! He *is* a dear! Why can't all men be like him? Oh, wouldn't it be delightful to have him make love to you! And so clever as he is, too! If he were a little younger I am sure I should fall in love with him! Indeed, I think I am in love with him as it is!"

Isabel smiled; it pleased her immensely to hear her father praised even by so irresponsible a rhapsodist as her cousin. And since Uncle John was her uncle, and since it was beyond the wildest dreams of possibility that he should ever be anything else, Euphemia did not scruple to praise him openly and to confide in him in secret: two things which the most gushing and rhapsodical of girls would instinctively shrink from doing with most men, however charming and however elderly; for the most charming and elderly man may suddenly assume the guise of a lover. Isabel was surprised on one or two occasions when she returned from school to hear that Euphemia had called and had had a long talk with her father, the purport of which he was close about, saying that she had "gossiped a little."

"But not even a girl," laughed Isabel, "would take two hours to 'gossip a little,' father; she must have gossiped a good deal."

"Yes," said Mr. Raynor; "she gossiped a good deal."

"But I must tell her," said Isabel, slyly; "she must not come and occupy two of your best hours with frivolous gossip—hours which you wish to devote to hard work. Of course, Phemy has no idea that anybody should want to be busier than she is herself."

"Oh no, my dear!" exclaimed Mr. Raynor, in alarm. "I beg you will not do that. I find her gossip very charming and improving. Women, my dear, are, and always have been, to me a never-failing well-spring of joy. They appear so complex, and they are so simple and so good!" and a moistness came upon his eye, and a softness into his voice. "Men are seldom so good as they seem; women are always better. They are wonderful creatures! You remember Coleridge's pleasant way of putting it: 'Man seems to have been designed for the superior being of the two; but, as things are, I think women are generally better creatures than men.' By-the-way, have you ever met Lord Clitheroe at your uncle's?"

"Once," answered Isabel; "yes, twice." And she said within herself, "So *he* was the subject of the long gossip!"

"What do you think of him?" asked her father, simply.

"His person or his mind, father?"

"Both, my dear. They are properly inseparable."

"He is a tall young man, with a big red beard and a bald head, which makes his forehead look roomier than it probably is, and he always wears gloves, because, I believe, his hands are amazingly hairy."

"If he is ashamed of his hair," said her father, "why doesn't he shave?"

"What? His hands?"

"No, no, my dear; his beard."

"I have not talked much with him, father, and I can't say. But I should guess that, though he has what is called a 'carelessly aristocratic' air, he is very sensitive about his personal appearance."

"Does he give himself any airs of superiority?"

"No," she answered, "I don't think he does. He looks rather solemn and heavy; but I believe he is more interested in Phemy than he understands, and that she is more attracted to him than she thinks."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" said her father, with a smile. "Well, he appears, on the whole, to be a very good fellow."

When Isabel next saw Euphemia she sprang the question upon her: "Why haven't you told me anything about Lord Clitheroe?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Euphemia, with a charming blush, "that means your father has told you! I shall never trust Uncle John with a secret again."

"No, my dear," said Isabel; "it means nothing of the sort. It only means that a woman can pick a secret out of a man as you can pick a feather out of a feather-bed."

"Well, I might say to you," retorted Euphemia, "why haven't you told me anything about Alan Ainsworth?"

"About Alan Ainsworth?" exclaimed Isabel, now blushing in her turn—but a deeper red than her cousin. "I have nothing to tell! We are very good friends, as you know, and he comes often and has talks with my father."

"Well," exclaimed the triumphant Euphemia, "he is here every evening!"

"Oh no; not nearly every evening," protested Isabel.

"As many evenings as he can spare," maintained Euphemia. "What does that mean, my dear? And he takes you for evening walks in the Park—to enjoy a talk with Uncle John? Not he! He does his very best always to get that funny, solemn Mr. Doughty out, so that he may have you all to himself, while my uncle and that poor Mr. Doughty (who adores you) are interested in the silly little quack-quacks!"

"Yes," said Isabel, meditatively, "I suppose he does. But did my father tell you all that?"

"No, my dear," answered Euphemia, with a mischievous wriggle; "that was not necessary: a woman can pick a secret out of a man as you can pick a feather out of a feather-bed."

At that, of course, they both laughed.

"Really, Phemy," said Isabel, "I did not think you were such a very clever child. But tell me all about Lord Clitheroe."

"Tell me all about Mr. Ainsworth," retorted Euphemia.

"Truly, my dear," said Isabel, "I have nothing to tell."

Euphemia wagged her head in disbelief.

"Well," said she, "I have little to tell about Lord Clitheroe; but I'll tell you the little I have. I'll be honest than you Bel; you always could be close if you wanted to. Oh, he is a dear droll man! And I believe he is very fond of me."

"But are you fond of him?" asked Isabel.

"Oh, I like him very well—though I think it's a pity he's so hairy. I tell him we are Beauty and the Beast, and he doesn't seem to mind; so that makes it all right."

"Oh," exclaimed Isabel, "you have become so familiar as that, have you?"

"I don't know what you mean by familiar, but certainly we are like that. There was quite a family parliament about it the other day, I believe. His mother, Lady Padiham, called one day in a great yellow chariot, that has double steps to let down for you to get in and out, and, really, Bel, my mother looked the greater lady of the two; she looked grander and she behaved grander, till, you know, if we had played our school-game with them—'nievey-nievey, nack-nack'—you'd have chosen my mother for the countess and the countess for the cotton-spinner's wife. She's an ugly, raw-boned Scotchwoman (and I don't care who hears me), a daughter of the old Earl of Pitligo."

"You don't seem, Phemy," said Isabel, with a smile, "to love and honor your future mother-in-law."

"I have told you, Bel, my dear," said Euphemia, "that there is nothing settled. Parliament is considering it—I mean the family parliament. Clitheroe will bring in a bill proposing to make me his wife (I believe that's what they do, isn't it?); it will be read a first, second, and third time, and I suppose Clitheroe will come again, or will not come, according to the final decision of parliament."

"You seem fairly indifferent," said Isabel.

"Yes; I am, and I'm not. Clitheroe is a dear, kind man, as I've told you, and I believe he is very fond of me, though I wish he were cleverer and I liked him more; but I should dearly love to be Lady Clitheroe and then Countess of Padiham."

"But, Phemy dear," said Isabel, seriously, "surely it is a dreadful, monstrous thing to think of marrying a man when you are not very much in love with him—when you are not sure he is the one man you could spend your life with!"

"Are *you* sure of that, Bel dear?"

"I'm not thinking of marrying, Phemy," replied Isabel.

"Well," said Phemy, "please don't talk like that to me — not now, at least. Your father has given me wagon-loads of good advice of that sort, which I do not see my way to make any use of. But Uncle John is the dearest, cleverest, best-spoken man in the world, and I love him very much."

Later Isabel was talking with her father of this conversation, and discussing what seemed to her the strange fact that Euphemia insisted more on Lord Clitheroe's fondness for her than on any fondness she had for him, when her father answered her in words that sank into her mind.

"Surely," said he, "it is not strange; it is the commonest way women have of regarding men. You remember the words of a wise man: 'The man's desire is for the woman; but the woman's desire is seldom other than for the desire of the man.'"

Isabel revolted against that wise saying, and if so be she had intended to speak of Ainsworth to her father, she now did not. But from that day she modified the walks in Regent's Park; she was studious that her father should not be left so much to himself, or to Mr. Doughty, and that she herself should not be so much engrossed with Mr. Ainsworth and his conversation; not because she did not like the former mode, nor because she thought it wrong, but merely for a sidelong reason (a touch of contrariness which as a clever woman she was open to): because she did not like a flighty

little thing like Euphemia to have perceived what she had not been fully aware of. Moreover, she thought, with an inward blush, "It is possible that Mr. Ainsworth has been quite conscious, and has thought that I also was conscious, that we kept apart from the others." And she thought again, with a deeper blush, "Can I have done anything to cause that impression? and can I appear to have been forward?"

It was unavoidable that, with these feelings and doubts jangling in her, Isabel should seem more self-conscious in Ainsworth's presence than she had been wont, and that Ainsworth, perceiving that, should become more self-conscious, too. The thermometer of his feeling then began to rise and fall and rise again at a mad rate: "She loves me! She loves me not! She loves me!" At one time he was on the heights of joy, at another in the depths of despair. And Isabel did not help to steady him; for she herself was as uncertain as he—which may seem somewhat odd. For a man, being commonly a dull, thick-witted creature compared with a woman, seldom recognizes when a woman is in love with him; but a woman seldom misses to recognize when a man is in love with her; she fails to recognize it only when she herself is in love with the man, for then her feeling rises and clouds her clear perceptions. Now that was Isabel's condition. She was in love with Ainsworth, though she hardly knew it; and therefore she remained very much in darkness and doubt concerning the kind of regard that Ainsworth had for her. All which refinements are riddles to those who have never been in love.

Uncertainty of that kind was fast becoming unendurable to Ainsworth. Once and again he was on the point of putting his fate "to the touch, to win or lose it all;" but he was deterred by one or two considerations. He was a notably impulsive person, but yet he had a considerable leaven of reserve and forethought in his composition. "I love her! Let everything yield to that!" prompted impulse. "But," suggested forethought, "is it fair to ask a beautiful, noble girl like her to share your lot until it is better established? And is it quite fair and honorable to try to snatch a victory over young George Suffield while she may be still in doubt whether she loves him or not?" In spite of all that, it is extremely probable that impulse would have won the day (with a man like Ainsworth it usually does when it comes to protracted debate) had it not been that something happened very soon to turn aside for a time the current of emotion.

It was towards the end of July — so near the end that the holidays were within hail, and Isabel had already arranged where she was to spend them with her father. It had been an unbearably hot week throughout the country—so hot that many cases of sunstroke were reported in the newspapers; laborers in the field and soldiers who had felt the sun of India had been struck down; and all the world of London was panting in the lightest of raiment, and with doors and windows flung wide open. On a certain afternoon, just when Isabel had returned from school, a cab rattled up to the gate, and Euphemia ran in with a scared face.

"Father," said she, "has sent me on with that. He couldn't come himself. He is going off by the first train he can catch." And after an instant's doubt between Isabel and her father, she handed to Isabel a telegram.

The telegram, which Isabel opened with trembling fingers and the wildest, vaguest fears, was dated from "*Llanberis, North Wales*," and ran thus:

"To Suffield, M.P., Rutland Gate, London.

"Mr. Raynor sunstroke Snowdon. Lying now at The Gwydyr, Llanberis. Doctor says no hope. Come at once.—Daniel."

CHAPTER XXI

DANIEL'S INTERLUDE

THAT telegram signed "Daniel" demands full explanation.

When George Suffield (the younger) received his uncle's request for a few weeks' of Daniel's service, he congratulated himself, on the whole. Daniel was useful, Daniel was even valuable; but that singular encounter with Daniel in the clough, and that mysterious light in the counting-house (which still was unexplained) had made him doubt whether, after all, there might not be more in Daniel than met the eye. He was loath to commit himself to suspicion of Daniel; so he welcomed the opportunity of being parted from Daniel for a time, so that he might turn his qualities over in his mind at leisure, and consider whether he really ought to trust him or not.

As for Daniel himself, when Mister George told him that he must prepare at once to go to London to attend again for some weeks upon the Sahib Raynor, he bowed with his hands upon his breast, saying, "Respectable Mister George, I am obedient as the horse to the rein;" but he went out from Mister George's presence into the night and wept bitterly, flung his white turban on the ground and stamped on it, and then went in-doors and packed his bag (and saw that a long knife in a sheath at the bottom of the bag was bright and sharp), and finally he sat down with his chin in his hand and his nails between his teeth, and viciously thought. With regard to this journey, he complained, it was a great pity that it must be gone upon — oh, a very great pity! Just at the time when the things and the business, etcetera, which he had set himself to do were beginning to look as if they really would get done, he was removed, taken away, banished! But he would come back! Oh yes! Yet what if the Sahib Raynor said, "Daniel must stay with me; I need him?" (Daniel chewed his nails with the mere thought of it, for he had not got rid of the old impression that the Sahib Raynor had to be obeyed without question.) He knew, he saw clearly as in a glass, what he would be and do. He

would make himself — oh yes! — a stupid person, to the end that the Sahib Raynor might be glad to be rid of him again! And in addition he would make the Sahib Raynor endure things—yes, he would!—for taking him away from his purpose now and causing him to lose precious time, and perhaps opportunity!

George was very considerate with Daniel next morning, being half-ashamed of his sense of relief that Daniel was going. He carefully instructed him what he must do when he left the train in London in order to reach Rutland Gate without mishap or loss, and he wished to send some one to the station to see him off. But Daniel so earnestly protested that he could manage completely by himself that he was allowed to depart with his bag alone. Had George followed him into the town he would have understood why he was so resolved to go alone, and he might have seen further reason to be suspicious of his guilelessness.

Arrived in the town, Daniel took a roundabout way to the railway station, walking with haste lest he should lose his train. In a certain old square whose houses, formerly dwelt in by city magnates, were now become business offices, and whose door-jambs or pillars were plastered with the names of men of all nations—Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia—he turned in at a door where was inscribed among other names, "TANDERJEE & CO., 2d FLOOR." Up to the second floor Daniel lightly climbed, knocked at the door on the glass panel of which appeared, "*Mr. Tanderjee. Private,*" and, without waiting for an invitation, entered. Mr. Tanderjee sat at a writing-table, and his gleaming spectacles at once took in the significance of Daniel's appearance.

"A bag!" said he, in English. "You travel! You go away! What is this?" And he ran with a flourish of both his hands towards Daniel.

Daniel cast a hurried glance at the door of the other room, and answered in Tamil:

"It is to be deplored, O Worshipper of the Sun; but I must serve that I may rule. My former master needs me for a time, and my new master says, 'Go. Peace be with you.' And I must go; there is no help. But I will come again after not very many days—after, perhaps, another moon—and all will go well."

Mr. Tanderjee gently approached him with two ringed fingers spread in an expository fashion, and the two scoundrels faced each other, and looked exceedingly respectable in their black alpaca coats. When they spoke their tones were soft, which

sounded uncanny, considering the quarrelsome matter of their conversation.

"It may be," said he, also in Tamil, "that all will go well. Yet, my son, consider. Gold-dust I will give much for, but brick-dust no man will buy. Things performed are to me as gold-dust; promises are but brick-dust; you bring me, my son, only brick-dust."

"You are unjust, O worshipper of the Lord of Light," said Daniel. "Have I not brought you and my wealthy, foolish master nearer together? Am I not the strong link between you?"

"But the link goes," said Tanderjee.

"That link will return," said Daniel. "Have no fear. And have you not benefited by his purchase of the cotton of India? Is there no gold-dust in that?"

"There is not much, my son. But where are the plans of the new—the precious, the beautiful—machines which are so jealously guarded? You do not bring them to me?" And there was an arid flash and glitter in the Parsee's spectacles.

"I did not find them when I looked. I was disturbed, and almost caught, as I have told you, O worshipper of the Lord of Light! But I cannot fail. I have my way of entering, which no man can guess, except it may be the old Guru, who is a seeker out of strange and secret things; and him I will cause to be sent away when I return."

"When you return, my son! It is brick-dust, my son!" And Tanderjee in his eloquence made his two fingers flash and flutter before Daniel's eyes.

"Listen and understand, O Mr. Tanderjee!" said Daniel, losing patience at last. "The danger is all mine! I am as a man walking about through many dark doors whose lintels are low; I may knock my head at any time. I am as the mattress on which you and Mr. Gorgonio rest. Is the comfort of repose felt by the mattress? No, indeed!"

Daniel was turning away, but Tanderjee came before him and pressed him gently between his two outstretched hands.

"Behold, it is well. I did but try you, my son. We are brothers in this! But there is much to be done ere the end arrives, and the time is uncertain. We are more than brothers! Behold, I bestow on you my ring."

"Keep the ring, O worshipper of the Lord of Light," said Daniel, "until such time as I give you sufficient gold-dust to equal its value. But the clock warns it is time that I go to the train."

"Peace and prosperity go with you, my son," said Tanderjee. "Return with speed. I shall await you as the mistress awaits her lover."

So these two precious creatures parted; and Daniel went on to meet his late master.

Of the manner in which Daniel spent that evening in London we have had already some hint. Next day he set out with the Sahib Raynor on his fatal travels, taking charge of the familiar tent and other impedimenta which the sahib insisted on carrying along with him. Daniel did not know when they set out where they were going; but the sahib on the way to the station bought large maps of the south and west of England, paid a visit to his bank, and then took the train to Sittingbourne. Thence he hired a carriage and horses, and they were driven through the rich orchard lands of Kent. Daniel found it difficult to carry out his design of showing himself "a stupid person;" for by this mode of progression it fell to him to do little but sit beside his master and see that he was comfortable when they arrived at a hotel for the night. Moreover, his master was unusually silent and self-involved, and demanded little of him—so self-involved and absent-minded, indeed, that he seemed frequently to wake up to wonder why Daniel was in his company. It was only in pitching the tent for the night—the sahib always contrived to put up at some village inn or outlying hostel, attached to which was an orchard, or other private and secluded ground, where he could have his peculiar night arrangements—it was only then that Daniel could show himself awkward or stupid; but yet his pains were lost, for Mr. Raynor took no note of him.

Thus they drove on from day to day through all that lovely southern land, by the secluded "—dens" and "—hursts" of Kent and eastern Sussex, where peace and primeval content dozed on lea and furrow, in village and homestead—dozed with the heavy soil and the patient red oxen, slowly dragging through the clay ungainly wagons incrusting with primeval mud; by waving corn-field and breezy down, on into Hampshire and the New Forest, and so onward into the land of Arthurian romance. Everywhere as they passed the "swish" of the scythe or the "burr" of the reaping-machine was in their ear; the reaping was first of hay, then of barley, and then of oats; and so they drove on, as in a panoramic dream, to the greatest reaping of all, when the sahib himself was cut down. And the farther they went the more did the ravish-

ing sweetness of nature, the gentleness and docility of beasts, and the patient toil of men and women impress the mind and soften the heart of Mr. Raynor, till one night, in the loneliness of his tent, his hardness completely crumbled and melted, he was suffused with tenderness as a man is suffused with blood when his heart breaks, and he wept as he thought of his brother and his niece. "Women are far, far better than men!" he said to himself, unconsciously echoing a saying of his brother's uttered at about the same time; and he turned there and then in his prompt business-like way, lighted his candle, found paper and a pencil, and wrote to his niece: "I have been altogether wrong about you and your father. Forgive me. We shall be happy yet together," and more to the same effect. Then he blew out his light, turned over and went to sleep, at peace with all the world, although it was written that he and his forgiven brother would never be "happy together" again in this world.

In remarkable, wicked contrast with the blessed influence on Mr. Raynor of the peace and sweetness of nature was their effect on Daniel Trichinopoly. Never was better illustrated the folly of those who would reform the knave and the rascal by turning them into the fields and woods to "commune with Nature." Nature never yet made the wicked man turn away from his wickedness. The wide-spread calm and content gave Daniel a certain enjoyment, but yet they only served to make him more vicious and more impatient to be back at the nefarious work to which he had set his hand. He was wroth that the Sahib Raynor was thus idly carrying him round the country, and it did not in the least appease his wrath that wherever they passed and wherever they stayed his black face and white turban made him a more important and attractive person than his master. It chafed him that no blunder, however egregious and however carefully planned, could provoke more than the mildest rebuke—the rebuke as of an indulgent father; and it amazed him, too, for the Sahib Raynor had been wont to be sharp and severe in his discipline. And all the while Daniel could not do other than exhibit his usual suave and gentle demeanor; the which he found to be such a constraint and repression of himself that it was necessary for him to relieve his impatience and rage by dancing round the sahib's tent in the dark, and then, if the sahib heard and demanded "Who is there?" falling flat and sliding away through the grass like a snake.

So the days and the weeks passed till towards the end of

July, when they were in Wales. The season (as I have already noted) was hot and dry beyond measure; but yet the sahib insisted on walking far more in that land of mountain and stream than he had done anywhere else on the tour. He climbed Plinlimmon, and had a nasty fall down a rock; but still he climbed and scrambled in sun and shade, followed by the polite Daniel perspiring with resentment.

It was on the morning of the hottest day they had yet experienced that they were at Beddgelert preparing for the ascent of Snowdon. The baggage was to be sent on by the high-road to meet the sahib at Llanberis; and after a sufficient late breakfast the sahib, his servant, and a guide set out for the mountain whose sides were quivering under the haze of heat. Of the three ascents of Snowdon it is well known that that from Beddgelert is the most difficult. It is doubly difficult on a summer day; for not only is the route long and dangerous, but, since it is directly from the south, the sun beats upon the traveller's spine the whole way, and the rocks throw back the glare and heat on the traveller's face. That day the ascent was terrible, but Mr. Raynor would not listen to the guide's suggestion that they should return and try again late in the afternoon or early next morning. "It is absurd," said he. "I have felt hotter suns than this."

So they labored on in the terrific heat, now resting and panting in a scrap of shade, and now turning their hot backs to the sun again. About three o'clock, when they had accomplished about three-fourths of the ascent, and when the sun was beating most furiously on them, Mr. Raynor suddenly reeled, pitched forward, and fell as if shot. Both Daniel and the guide knew what had happened: the English sun had stricken down the old Indian traveller. If Daniel knew anything to do then for the recovery of his old master, he did nothing; but he waited by him while the guide ran on to the summit for a litter, and when the litter was brought he helped the guide to carry him—all the while secretly elated that his wanderings were now likely to come to an end. At the hut known as The Summit Hotel there chanced to be a doctor. He at once examined Mr. Raynor, and ordered that he should be carried down to Llanberis, he himself going with him, and Daniel following, docile and attentive.

For the first time since he had returned to England the traveller lay in a bed in a bedroom—lay completely still and apparently unconscious. Daniel sat by him the whole evening and night

through, and the doctor looked in every now and then. There was nothing to be done but to watch and wait; and Daniel watched and waited, afraid now, not so much of his old master, as of the shadow of death. About midnight Daniel sat in silence, meditating in his half-pagan, semi-barbarous way on the strange facts of life and death, when the sahib opened his eyes and looked at him.

"Ah, sahib!" murmured Daniel, with his hands crossed on his breast. He continued in his Tamil, "Lord of many travels, and are you indeed turned back again from the door of the other world? Is it a door that is hard to open? Kàsi, O master, is formed but of two letters, yet how many hours will it take to reach it! And although a man may go to Kàsi, he may miss his way to Heaven! But a good man is fit to sit at meat with the gods. Therefore, O master, be of good cheer."

Daniel ceased; for he perceived on the sahib's countenance what he interpreted as a demand for attention.

"Ah," said Daniel, "and is the tongue stricken as well as the limbs and the body, O master?"

The sahib looked pointedly at Daniel, and from him to a small locked valise on a chair, in which Daniel knew the traveller carried his papers, his journal or diary, and other property of an intimately private kind. Daniel laid his hand on the valise with a look of approval from his master, and, still with his approval, took the keys from his master's pocket, selected the proper one, and opened the valise. He took out one thing after another, his master watching him the while, but giving no sign that the thing he wanted was reached until Daniel held in his hand the clasped volume in which the sahib frequently wrote at night. Daniel held that up with a look of interrogation, and the sahib gave a murmur of assent, and repeatedly tried to frame a word like "Isabel."

"Isabel?" queried Daniel; and the sahib assented and turned his eyes again on the valise.

Daniel returned to it, and continued to take out one thing and another until he produced the sahib's pocket-book. The sahib again murmured his assent. What did the sahib wish to be done with it? Something in particular to be taken out of it? Daniel opened it, and his eye and hand first turned to some bank-notes. A third time the sahib murmured assent, and seemed to frame the word "wages" and "good."

"To me, O master?" inquired the astonished Daniel. "But you

have paid me my wages—all except a very little! And here are altogether five, ten—yea, fifty pounds!”

But the sahib with insistence seemed to signify that the money was for him. Daniel, with an agonized look of inquiry, caught the bank-notes to his breast. The sahib plainly assented to that, and with his eyes signified that he wished the pocket-book now to be returned to the valise. Then Daniel was overwhelmed for the moment with gratitude and shame; the sahib thought he had behaved well, and the sahib thus rewarded him! The undeserved reward was too much for even Daniel. The sahib had closed his eyes, but he opened them again.

“Let me speak, O master,” he cried, “words of thanks! Your generosity, O master, is as the generosity of Karnan, the greatest of the seven princes! And let me speak again, O master, but this time hear me not! Shut the ears to my words, for they are not good! My heart has nursed anger! I came with vinegar, and, behold, I bring away milk! But the sahib’s heart is noble as that of a king, and he rewards the undeserving! I shall forever remember the bounty of the sahib!” Daniel was silent, for his master had again closed his eyes; a deep flush overspread his face; and he began to breathe very stertorously. Daniel glided swiftly to the door, and called the doctor. The doctor came.

“Ah,” said he, “effusion on the brain! Poor gentleman! And, I suppose,” he added, looking at Daniel, “he has endured many fiercer suns than ours.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAST OF UNCLE HARRY

THE shock of the sudden and unlooked-for announcement of Uncle Harry's probable death smote roughly upon Isabel, and upon all; and the worst was that no one could do anything but wait with painful expectation for further news.

"Poor, lonely Uncle Harry!" Isabel could not refrain from exclaiming that night to her father. "To have wandered alone all his days with his life in his hand among strange, wild people, and now to lose it in his own country, and to be still alone! Oh, but the bitterest thought to me, father, is that he and you never met in reconciliation! He had intended that you should, I am certain; but it has been decreed otherwise!"

"Sad, sad!" said her father. "All things were shadows to him, except those which moved his affections! 'Shadows we are, and shadows we pursue!'"

That was all; but he was manifestly much affected. He stroked his brow and twitched his fingers; and when he had withdrawn for the night he tramped his bedroom floor for hours.

Isabel was anxious about him, for she perceived he was slipping into one of his nervous conditions, in which it was his habit to flee for relief to his deadly drug. Yet she must go to school next day. Before she went she sent for Doughty, and earnestly impressed on him the necessity of being assiduous in his watchfulness over his chief.

"Miss Raynor," said he, "what man can do, short of absolute violence, I will do; be assured."

Yet when she returned from school her father was gone, and Doughty too! There was, however, a pencil-scrawl from Doughty: "He would *not* be detained by any consideration I could urge. So I have gone with him. Do not blame me; I am a miserable being.—A. D." To add to the overwhelming pain of that discovery there was a telegram from her Uncle Suffield: "He was gone before I reached here. I am told the last word on his lips was 'Isabel.'"

Will write." Isabel took that to mean that Uncle Harry meant to convey his forgiveness to his brother. And why was his brother not there to receive it? She bowed her head on her hands, and wept tears of bitter disappointment and humiliation. She knew herself well enough to perceive that if her father frequently behaved in this cowardly manner—ran away from the slightest touch of pain—then her patience would give out, and she would revolt against him. She feared that the feeling of revolt might suddenly rise within her to overturn and destroy all her careful plans for her father's salvation, and she cried through her tears, "Don't let that happen! Oh, don't let that happen!"

Presently she dried her tears, and rose and bathed her eyes, and went out with all speed to ask Alan Ainsworth to help her. Like a true knight, he did not linger to get explanations nor even to receive a kind word, but sprang away to perform her bidding. Three or four hours later the erring father arrived home again in a cab with Doughty; Ainsworth had sent them home thus after leaving them in the Strand, with an apology to Miss Raynor for not accompanying them all the way, because he had a theatrical performance to attend. Then Isabel blamed herself for hurrying him off on her errand when he had business of his own so imminent.

"Oh, father, father!" she said to her father when they were alone. "Could you not at such a time have endured to stay at home, when we were expecting to hear about Uncle Harry at any hour? Read that." And she handed him Uncle Suffield's telegram; and that was all the reproach she gave him.

"The bitterness of death is past for him!" said he, with that loose-lipped and limp manner peculiar to him at such a time; "there remains for me the bitterness of life!"

Next morning came the promised letter from Uncle Suffield, giving such details as the reader knows—that there had been complications in Uncle Harry's case, that he had not spoken from the moment he had been struck down, save near the end, when he had murmured "Isabel," and signified that a book in which he had written many things was to be given to her.

"So you see, my dear," wrote Mr. Suffield, "he had you in his thoughts at death, as I know he had you in his thoughts in life. He lay there looking very peaceful, as I saw him. I don't think he had let the sun go down upon his wrath—you know what I mean. Poor Harry! I could have better missed a better man. But he was a good man, was Harry, though he was

obstinate and cranky. Yet he was thoughtful for all, as they will discover, and at the very last thoughtful particularly of his faithful black servant. I am arranging for his burial at his native place in Yorkshire. It will be three days hence, on the 23d, and I think you ought to bring your father, who, I hope, is keeping well under your care, my dear. I think that is all I need say at present."

When the proposal that he should attend the funeral of his brother was presented to him, John Raynor shied at it as a nervous horse shies at its own shadow.

"I have not," said he to his daughter, "and never had, any dread of death merely as death! It's all the thoughts and memories and regrets that flap round it like hungry vultures that make it horrible and distracting. I can do Harry no good by going to see his coffin put into the ground—our funeral arrangements are of the most gloomy and revolting kind—I can do him no good, and I can only give myself pain. Besides, my dear, there is the great expense of so long a journey."

"But just think, father," urged Isabel. "These things you say are quite true. But is it not in a proper sense unmannerly and inhuman to seek to live so much outside the common feelings and customs of average humanity? You can do no good to the dead by going, but you can please the living. If you do not go it will be thought that you cherish resentment against your brother; and I am sure you don't do that."

"I don't! I don't!" answered her father. "Poor Harry!"

"Then, father dear, brace up your feelings to go. I'll go with you, of course, and it probably will not be so painful an experience, after all."

So Mr. Raynor yielded and went.

It was a beautiful day when Harry Raynor was laid in the little churchyard of his native village. The church stood high on a breezy upland, with its head set to look away over wold and sea towards the gorgeous and mysterious East, straining its eyes, as it were, to catch a glimpse of those distant lands where its latest dead had spent the best years of his life. It was always cool and fresh up there. The bent of the few trees showed how the wild northeaster ranged at will in winter, and the lean and rugged clover and corn, how even the soft zephyr of summer had a frolicsome briskness unknown below. As Isabel had anticipated, her father and her aunt met over the grave, and the natural tie of blood asserted itself. Mrs. Suffield clasped her brother's hand, and a

tear stole into the eye of each. And when the funeral was over they had reminiscences of their youth to exchange with old friends, neighbors who had never left home, and whom they discovered to be living the same lives, exchanging the same opinions, and venturing on the same jokes as they remembered were in use when they were young. Is not that kind of thing the chief charm of a belated visit to the home of our youth?

To Isabel the most memorable fact of the occasion was the presence with her Cousin George of Daniel Trichinopoly, "the faithful black servant" of her late uncle. He was a picturesque reminder of her uncle's strange and adventurous career; and, moreover, he impressed on her the fact of his recent intimate connection with her uncle.

"Mees Isabel," said he, approaching softly, with a bow and a smile, when the sahib had been committed to the embrace of mother earth, "may I address a word? With regard to the respectable sahib, my good and noble master which is gone away, I am rejoice to say he have trusted me with a thing to do. He have say, hardly and scarcely, 'Isabel,' and have put his eyes on this book, and with attention I have took care and bring it myself, and I place it, lady, in your respectable hand."

"Daniel," said George, coming forward, "asked me what he should do about the book. He had happened to bring it away, because he thought he was intrusted with it, and so I said he had better present it to you himself."

"With regard," said Daniel, "it is so. It is right, is it not? Hope the book will be handy to you, etcetera. Respectable mees, I kiss the hand."

"I am much obliged to you, Daniel," said Isabel; and Daniel withdrew.

"So," said her aunt, who, seeing what was toward, had come near with her husband and her brother, "you have got possession of your book, Bel. I suppose poor Harry prized it, and expected you particularly to prize it. A clasped book, too. Private matters written in it, I suppose?"

Isabel, considering herself thus challenged to open it, undid the clasp, and looked here and there at what was written.

"It seems to be a diary of his tour, with reflections," said she, and closed it again.

"Your uncle and I," continued her aunt, "have been thinking that we should put up some monument or memorial of Harry; but

we have thought also we should not do anything without consulting you."

"Me, aunt?" exclaimed Isabel.

"A man's true monument," said Isabel's father, sadly, "is the work he has done."

"Well, that too," said her aunt, quickly, "is represented by the fortune he made—which, I am thankful to say, is left in the family. But it seems only a nice and proper thing to do to put up something to show that the family appreciates what he has done. And now that the family happens to be all together—"

"But, aunt," protested Isabel, "the family, surely, will be all together many a time after this. Can't we let this day pass with its own proper duty?"

"It might be well, my dear," said her aunt, "to settle something now, since we must consult the clergyman whenever anything is done. But just as you please, Bel, my dear."

"But why should it be as I please, aunt?" said Isabel, really perplexed. "Why should you defer to me? It is surely a matter for you and uncle and my father to arrange."

"And for you, too, my dear," said her uncle, patting her shoulder. "Though you will understand that better by-and-by; I *think* you will. But don't worry her about it, Joan."

Still Isabel did not guess why her opinion should be asked, nor why she should be deferred to. And her aunt again urged her point, and carried it; and then they all went in quest of the vicar.

"You had better bring Bel along, George," said Aunt Joanna to her son, who was standing aloof. "You haven't seen her since Whitsuntide, and you can tell her how things have been going in Lancashire."

And still Isabel could not understand why her aunt, who had hitherto sought to keep her and George apart, should now seek to bring them together.

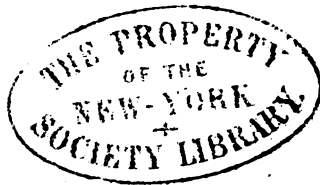
Soon it was time to separate—George and "the faithful black servant" to return to Lancashire, and the others to London.

It was thus on good terms with each other they went their several ways. Mr. and Mrs. Suffield had first-class tickets, and Suffield insisted that Isabel and her father should travel back first class also, smiling significantly when Isabel protested she could not afford it, and himself paying the difference on their third-class tickets. But the journey was long, and the fatigue was great in spite of the comfort of a first-class carriage; and the opposite

tempers of Mrs. Suffield and her brother soon were in a condition of friction. There was no open disagreement, but each felt that a very little of the other's company was sufficient for the day. As they sped away south silence fell upon them; but when they entered upon the rich, flat, fen district, the quiet, sleepy charm of the land soothed and softened their spirits. The day was almost done; the darkness was slowly gathering and rising like a vapor in the low east, and in the west the burning sun was sinking fast, thronged around with courtly clouds of glory. It was a gorgeous and bewildering spectacle, and, as they watched it, the dark and solemn trees in the distance stood up tall—stood, as it were, on tiptoe—to see the lord of light go down over the rim of the earth—reminding them of the mystery and the wonder of Death, from which they were being whirled away to the small cares and anxieties and the entangling hopes and fears of Life.

And then they rolled along through the swiftly gathering gloom, with their imaginations and feelings subdued; and at length rushed in among the lights and the hot haze and vapors of London. It was a notable experience for them all. At King's Cross the Suffield carriage was in waiting, and bore them on together to the gate of Isabel's lodgings, where they said adieu.

"I shall want to see you very particularly to-morrow," said her uncle to Isabel at parting. "Lucky that it's Saturday and you've no school. I'll come in the morning."



CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT WILL SHE DO WITH IT?

NEXT day there commenced a new epoch in Isabel's life. Her uncle came early as he had promised, and at once opened his business to her.

"Well, my dear," said he, "poor Uncle Harry's gone, and he couldn't take his hard-won brass with him. To do him justice, he was not the kind of man that wanted to; he knew he'd have to leave it (though he hoped to enjoy it a little longer himself), and to do him justice again, knowing he had it to leave, my dear, he fixed on the best heir to it that he could have chosen. I know that, my girl, because I saw the will when it was drawn up, and I am set down in it as executor. And who do you think now, my lady, he has appointed his heir?"

"It would be absurd," said Isabel, turning very pale, "to pretend, uncle, that I don't know what you mean and whom you mean, and that I don't now understand what you were driving at yesterday. But I think you must be mistaken."

"No mistake at all," said Mr. Suffield. "You're his heir, my girl—and the best he could have chosen."

"Still, uncle dear," persisted Isabel, "I would not be too sure about it. It was some weeks ago—was it not?—that he made that will; and things have happened since then. He was made angry and disappointed; he may have made another will that you don't know of."

"Another will?" exclaimed Suffield, blushing with indignation. "He wouldn't do such a thing! No, no. His property is all personal, and you've come into the enjoyment of it, to the tune of three or four thousand a year."

"Three or four thousand a year!" exclaimed Mr. Raynor, who had listened with interest, but unmoved till now. "Has Harry made all that?"

"He has, John," answered Suffield; "coined it out of his brains and blood, you may say."

Mr. Raynor looked deeply envious an instant, then his brow cleared, and he rose and came to his daughter, and took both her hands in his.

"I congratulate you, my child," said he, in a voice that thrilled with emotion. "I have not been able to provide for you as I ought; but I rejoice exceedingly that it has been reserved for one of my own blood to provide for you so nobly. That, to my mind, reflects a generous lustre back over Harry's whole life!"

"What?" said Suffield. "Did you find Harry's life needed something of that sort, then, John? But we had better not discuss it. We must go to the lawyer's, my dear, to see the details of the thing."

"I am ashamed," said Isabel, "that we should be talking of it at all now! It seems so dreadfully inhuman to be counting his gold over his dead body! Poor, dear Uncle Harry! I did nothing for him—nothing at all—that he should shower his wealth on me! Oh, I can't believe it's true! There *must* be a mistake!"

"You see, my dear," said the practical Mr. Suffield, "he was bound to shower it on somebody—unless, of course, he left it to an institution; and Harry always thought more of persons than of institutions, as I do. But you must come away with me and make sure about it."

So Isabel set out with her uncle, and her father settled down to talk of these strange and surprising matters with Doughty (who had just come in). At the lawyer's it was found that Mr. Suffield was right; that the will he spoke of existed, and that no other was known to exist. Unless, therefore, another will should be found among Uncle Harry's papers, when they came to be carefully examined, Isabel without doubt inherited all his property, with certain insignificant exceptions of small gratuities and presents bestowed here and there—notable among which was a legacy of £50 to Daniel Trichinopoly.

A few days were enough to settle the point whether there was another will, and none being found, Isabel was, almost before she was aware, inducted into "the usufruct" of her uncle's estate. It is not necessary to dwell on the details of this transition time. Two things only need be particularly mentioned: first, that she gave notice at the College for Ladies that she would not return there after the end of the term (she did that with great good-will, though she thereby made herself liable to a fine of a term's salary; for she was not of those who take delight in the drudgery of teach-

ing); and, second, that she had a long talk with Alan Ainsworth concerning her new prospects and designs.

Alan, having heard of the death and burial of Mr. Harry Raynor, had let a becoming interval elapse before calling again on his friends in the Marylebone lodgings. It thus happened that he chanced to call on the very evening before the day when Isabel and her father purposed to travel with the Suffields to the sea-side. Mr. Raynor (who sat alone with Alexander) at once opened the subject which in those days occupied much of his attention: had Ainsworth heard of the extraordinary change in Isabel's lot? No; Mr. Ainsworth had not. Not that she was the sole heir of Harry's property, and was now the recipient of something like three or four thousand pounds a year? No; Mr. Ainsworth had not heard. And it might have been remarked, whether Mr. Raynor remarked it or not, that while he made the admission Mr. Ainsworth turned ghastly pale.

"Now to me," said Mr. Raynor, "it appears a very curious and difficult problem: to what extent are the prospects of a girl changed by such an accession of fortune? And I answer myself that it very much depends; that in the case of my daughter, for instance, her prospects are changed to very much more than the extent of her nominal income. A girl with money, but nothing else, is reckoned at the worth of her income; a girl with good looks, if she have a pleasant disposition also, has precedence, in this country at least, of a girl who merely has money; certainly a beautiful girl, who is also good and clever, has precedence of both; and most certainly a beautiful girl, who is also good and clever, and well-educated and well-mannered, has precedence of all—and quite properly; for she is the paragon of women."

"She is," said Ainsworth, laconically.

"But here comes the remarkable fact in our social reckoning of values: Add to the beautiful girl, who is also good and clever, and well-educated and well-mannered—add a fortune, and she is almost apotheosized; her opportunities are raised to the Nth magnitude!"

"Not to my mind," said Ainsworth; "though I recognize that society at large does not, and the young lady herself may not, agree with me."

"But," continued Mr. Raynor, ignoring the obvious feeling in Ainsworth's remarks, "I am thinking of the view of the majority. It strikes me as a very notable social fact that wealth has that singularly elastic value: the value stretches with every added in-

tangible quality, grace, or charm which the young lady may possess. Wealth alone equals merely itself; but wealth *plus* good looks equals more than the simple addition; and so on at an enormous and incalculable rate of progression of values."

Then Isabel came in and said she had been packing, in view of their journey next day.

"And you were going," said Ainsworth, "without giving me an opportunity of saying good-bye?"

"I thought," said she, humbly, with a fresh touch of rose on her cheek, "since we had not seen you for some time, that you must be very busy, and would not care to be troubled; you have been very much occupied of late, have you not?"

"And," said he, "I understand you must have been very much occupied, too—'The queen was in her parlor, counting up her money.' You are now, I believe, the mistress of wealth beyond all dreams of avarice."

"Oh," said she, glancing towards her father with a slight contraction of her beautiful brows, "my father has been telling you; he is full of the subject."

"May I congratulate you?" said Ainsworth. "I hope you will be happy in its possession, and I am sure you will spend it well."

She looked at him frankly and half-sadly.

"You do not seem pleased," said she, "that it should have come to me."

"Then," said he, in his impulsive way, "I am very ungenerous. But I *am* glad, truly glad, of your good-fortune so far as it is good, and I hope you will be happy in spite of it."

"Your answer, Ainsworth," said Mr. Raynor, "has something of the character of the verdict pronounced by an excellent judge, who said to a culprit, 'Not guilty; but don't do it again.'"

"I dare say it has," said Ainsworth, with a laugh which did not sound very hilarious. "You are going away," he said, turning suddenly to Isabel; "if you can spare the time from your packing, let us all take a walk in the Park, as we used to do. There will be no more walks when you return from your holiday; you will then be fully invested with your golden splendor, and nothing but carriage exercise must be thought of."

"Yes," said she; "let us go into the Park; but you must promise not to talk any more in that absurd strain."

"I promise," said he, humbly.

Now it so happened that these two young people, with the

sincerest desire to be in accord, were at cross-purposes of outlook. Ainsworth thought that Isabel's fortune now made all the difference in the world between them (and Mr. Raynor had innocently emphasized that conclusion), while Isabel did not take her fortune into account as making any difference at all. The intent, therefore, of what each said to the other was a great deal misunderstood. Isabel saw that Ainsworth was disposed to make much of her altered circumstances, though she did not apprehend that he thought a gulf was now fixed between them, and she gayly and generously set herself to make him feel that she was the same Isabel as before, only with greater means to benefit her friends; while all these efforts to engage him in her interests Ainsworth took as more and more evidence that she was rejoicing in the new prospects that opened up for herself. He was very foolish; but remember he was at heart very sad and sore.

"I do verily believe," said she, while her bright, dark eyes sparkled as they stepped along together to the Park, "that you imagine I am going to turn all the gold poor Uncle Harry has left into a pedestal, and that I shall stand on top of it above all the common world I have known."

"I suppose," said he, "that there is gold enough to make a pedestal of."

"I dare say there is," said she.

"I do think," said he, "that it is far too much for one person. What can one person do with so much?"

"Do?" she exclaimed, mischievously. "You do not seem to give me much credit for resource. First, I mean to spend a good deal on myself. I shall have as many new dresses as I like, and I shall get them made by the best dress-makers and the best tailors."

"To attract," said he, "the attention of mankind all the day long!"

"Well, sir," said she, "and why not?"

"Why not, indeed?"

"But," said she, "you are wrong in thinking that a woman dresses to please men; she dresses chiefly to make other women envious."

"Truly?" asked he, in his simplicity.

"Certainly," said she. "And then I mean to have a handsomely furnished flat; I have really very luxurious tastes."

"Well," said he, "supposing all these personal expenses consume one of the thousands, what do you propose to do with the others?"

"There's my father," said she, seriously. "And really and truly I confess that if it were not for him, and for another purpose I have long thought of, I would rather, I think, not have the money; I would hand it over to my uncle, who has done so much for me, to whom I owe so much."

"You would add water to the ocean," said Ainsworth.

"Yes," said she, "it might look something like that. But I don't intend to do it. I have plans for my father that I cannot tell you about now. And then I have a great scheme which I used to dream about before there was any likelihood of my giving it practical shape—I want to make a Home for Aged Governesses. People have written about old donkeys; Dickens—or one of his young men—wrote an article about them once, as you know, of course, and asked what became of them; but no one has ever troubled to inquire about aged governesses, not even the parents of the children to whom they have been in place of parents. What becomes of them when they cannot play the part of parents any more? I don't know; but I wish to make sure that so many as I can entertain, who have no home of their own to go to, shall live in a big house I shall provide, where they will sometimes see younger governesses to remind them of past days—governesses who wish to take a holiday in town, or to look out for a situation."

"Oh," said Ainsworth, "you would have your Home in London, then?"

"Certainly," answered Isabel.

"Not at the sea-side, or in the country?"

"Mr. Ainsworth," said Isabel, "I did not think *you* would be so dull as not to perceive my reasons for choosing London. Governesses have had enough in their lives of the sea-side and the country; they are sick of the sea-side and the country; and they do not need fresh air nearly so much as they need some wholesome excitement. Don't you understand that governesses are for the most part, and must be, in everything but what concerns their business or profession (call it which you like) as undeveloped and as unsatisfied as girls. Think of the restrictions they have lived under, seeing none scarcely but girls, speaking to none but girls, till they get girl on the heart and brain, and till they themselves are nothing but 'old girls.' (Of course I am speaking of governesses that live in families.)"

"But," said Ainsworth, "you have never been governess in a

family, and you are not aged; how is it you understand them so well? I can see that what you say about them must be true on the whole. Where have you studied them?"

"I studied them for three mortal days at an economical sea-side boarding-house, where half a dozen of them were living *en pension* at a reduced rate, poor things!"

"But, dear me," exclaimed Ainsworth (forgetting for the moment his sad, sore heart), "that is amazingly clever of you to understand them so well after so short an acquaintance! That's like the genius of Professor Owen, who, when he sees a bone, can draw the complete animal, even if he has never seen it before—a megatherium or an ichthyosaurus; it's really the genius of the great novelist who from a small hint can guess the whole. You ought to write novels, Miss Raynor."

"What!" said Isabel, with a sparkle of mischief in her eyes, "and take the bread out of the mouths of many poor women almost as deserving as governesses—I, with all my wealth? Besides, I remember the contempt with which writing women were once talked of in my hearing."

"Oh no," protested Ainsworth—"not contempt! No, no—not contempt!"

"Well," said Isabel, "if I do take to writing novels, they will be for private circulation only among my aged governesses, to add one more distraction to their poor old lives."

"You are bent on giving them distractions and excitements, then?" said Ainsworth. "That policy may have its advantage; you will kill them off quickly."

"Really," exclaimed Isabel, with a laugh, "your misanthropy, or, rather, your misogyny, to-night is startling! But you are wrong again, Mr. Ainsworth. Sufficient distraction and excitement are as necessary to civilized people as sufficient food (that, you must know, is the best scientific opinion), and my aged governesses shall have sufficient and no more, and so they shall prolong their days in the land. I'll make contracts with all managers of theatres—"

"Why not of music-halls?" interrupted Ainsworth.

"I must draw the line somewhere," said Isabel, "and I draw it there. The managers, I have no doubt, would be willing to quote reduced prices to a regular, and, as you may say, wholesale customer."

"I doubt very much if they would," laughed Ainsworth; "especially to such a very wealthy person as you will be known to be."

"Well," said Isabel, "let that pass; but I think I could prevail on them."

"Oh," exclaimed he, glancing with compulsory admiration at her noble and charming presence, "if it comes to that, I have no doubt you could."

"Then I should sometimes have Home dances. And you must come, Mr. Ainsworth, and dance with my aged."

"I, Miss Raynor?" cried Ainsworth, in abashed astonishment. "I should be delighted, but I can't dance a bit!"

"Then you must learn," said she, peremptorily.

"If I must, I must," said he. "When a great lady commands she must be obeyed," he added, with a foolish and feeble touch of sarcasm.

"Of course," said Isabel, quietly, making the touch of sarcasm of no avail. "And," she continued, "you must be one of my committee of gentlemen. I don't know what I want a committee for, since I intend to manage the Home myself; but it seems to be the regular and proper thing to have in such a case, and I intend to do all decently and in order."

"Oh, a committee," laughed Ainsworth, "need not interfere with your management. All it need do is to hear minutes, to propose, second, discuss, and accept or reject motions; and all you need do is to provide your committee with a room to sit in, and a table to sit at, the table being furnished with a bottle of water and a tumbler."

"And," said she, "Uncle George must be chairman of committee, and you must be secretary. Dear Uncle George! I should like to see him ruling the committee with his gentle rod. He wouldn't say 'bo!' to the greatest goose or bore for fear of hurting his feelings."

"And what shall Mr. Raynor and Alexander be?" asked Ainsworth.

"My father," said Isabel, with sudden seriousness, "and Mr. Doughty must be left out of this; I have other things in contemplation for them."

Thus they talked and walked; and before they were quite aware they were back again at the gate of the lodgings. Ainsworth refused to go in, but he lingered over his adieu to Isabel.

"I suppose," said he, "this is the last time I shall see you here. When you return to London it will be to the luxurious flat and the splendid dresses; though I shall think of you," said he, with an

instant's abandonment, "as in these lodgings and in the dresses I know. I have behaved brutally to-night!" he exclaimed, in a tremulous tone that startled and moved her. "I have been very ungenerous! Forgive me!"

"Oh no; don't say that!" said she, scarcely knowing what she said, but impulsively giving him her hand again.

"God bless you!" said he. He pressed her hand, and was gone with a lump in his throat.

And she thought that his feeling was only the tenderest friendship, and he thought that hers was pleasant preoccupation with the change in her affairs!

CHAPTER XXIV

GEORGE, BY LAND AND SEA

As the world wags, it was very excusable in Mrs. Suffield to think a good deal more of her niece as the possessor of three or four thousand a year than as the school-mistress earning a hundred and fifty. It was mainly on account of her urgency, therefore, that Isabel agreed that she and her father should spend their holiday at the same place as the Suffields; but it was wholly due to Isabel's own obstinacy that she resolved to take lodgings apart from her uncle and aunt. She believed that it would be better for her father not to see so much of his sister as would be necessary if he were her guest; and, moreover, he would be lost without his faithful henchman Alexander, and so Alexander must go with them. The next day, therefore, saw Isabel and her father thus established in a quiet house in Douglas, in the Isle of Man, two doors from another quiet house in which dwelt the Suffields. It is necessary to remark the "quiet," for most houses in Douglas in the holiday season are noisy beyond the endurance of any but the young people of the Land of Cotton who crowd into them.

It was Mrs. Suffield who had chosen Douglas for their holiday sojourn; and she had chosen it for two reasons apart from the fact that the Isle of Man is the paradise of Lancashire folk: Lord Clitheroe was going to cruise in his yacht in the Irish Sea, with Douglas for a centre or base; and her son George (who was so busy that he could not take a stretch of holiday) could easily manage to rush over to Douglas at each "week-end." The thought that Isabel and her son would thus, probably, be thrown a good deal together was now rather an incitement than a deterrent to her action. It cannot be said that she had formed any express plans to compass their marriage; she merely had the firm and honest conviction that Isabel was now a very fit match for her son, and that, on the whole, it would be a pity if Uncle Harry's money went out of the family. Besides, she was too clever and politic to seem to desire her niece for her son; for she knew her niece was as

clever as herself, and would probably compare her aunt's present desire with her former objection, and defeat her aunt's hopes.

George arrived in Douglas at the first week-end with unexpected magnificence. He also, like Lord Clitheroe, came in his yacht—which, he told his father, he had bought a bargain—but, as became a young cotton lord, his yacht was propelled by steam, while the young aristocrat's was moved in the ancient way. The whole company (save Mr. Raynor and his henchman) was assembled on the pier to receive him; and as soon as he stepped ashore he entered into a friendly argument with Lord Clitheroe regarding the speed of their respective vessels.

"Isn't she a beauty?" said he, regarding with admiration the rakish lines of his craft.

"Ye-es," drawled Clitheroe. "But I prefer a sailer to a steamer."

"For speed?" said George, "for comfort? or what?"

"For everything," answered Clitheroe, carelessly.

"Well, now," said George, "we've crossed from Liverpool in less than three hours, with the tide against us, too!"

"Ah," said Clitheroe, "have you? I crossed once in the *Seamew* there in two hours forty-three minutes from anchorage to anchorage with a good breeze on the quarter."

"Oh," said George, looking for a moment as if he had a mind to be incredulous. Then, repenting of that, he said: "That's the *Seamew* lying out there, is it? She's a pretty thing."

"Ah, but," said Euphemia, "you should see her with her wings spread, skimming over the water!"

"Ye-es," drawled Clitheroe, looking at Euphemia with confidence and approval. "She's lovely, isn't she?"

"Come, now, Bel," said George, turning to his cousin, "which do you like?"

"I like both," said she; "and I think I like the one as much as the other; they're so different. Yours, George, looks so business-like; Lord Clitheroe's looks—well, looks, when dressed in her sails, so lady-like."

"Ye-es," said Clitheroe, with ready appreciation, "ye-es; that's just it!"

"Yes," laughed Isabel, "I think that really must be it: the one's male, and the other is female. The one goes straight to where it wants to go whenever it wishes; the other waits for a favorable breeze, and then goes skimming prettily sideways, this way and that."

"Ye-es," said Clitheroe, again looking his approval. "That's a doosed clever notion. After this I shall always call a steamer '*he*,' and a sailor '*she*.'"

"Yes, it is very clever, Bel," said George, somewhat coldly. "I tell you what, Clitheroe," added he, suddenly, "if the weather holds, we'll both take a trip round the island to-morrow, and see which gets back here first."

"Good," said Clitheroe; "I'm game."

And so they walked off the pier, Mr. Suffield leading the way with his hand on his son's shoulder, and Lord Clitheroe following with Euphemia.

"Your cousin," said Clitheroe to Euphemia, "is a remarkably clever girl."

"Isn't she?" said Phemy, proudly. "And she's a dear girl, too!"

"I know a dearer," murmured Clitheroe.

"Oh no, you don't," said Phemy, with a pretty pout. "You only say that because you think I like it."

"Now," said Clitheroe, shaking his head down at her, "that's not fair. You know I never say anything to you but what I mean and believe. But your cousin looks very handsome and distinguished; she's exceptional in that way, and with the fortune she has now she should make a great match."

"What," asked Phemy, with a meaning look, "would you call a great match?"

"Dukes," said he, "are not common. But the Duke of Bilberry is single."

"Is he not," said she, "very old?"

"No," answered he; "he's somewhere between fifty and sixty. But dukes, like politicians, take long to mature. For instance, I am over thirty, but I am regarded as a mere boy in politics."

"So," said she, impudently, "I dare say you are. But a duke won't do for Bel; she expects a prince."

"A prince, does she? I don't think there are any princes in the market; no, no (what is the word?)—quotations in princes. Besides, a German prince is not nearly so much worth while as an English duke."

"I didn't say a German prince; I mean a fairy prince, you goose! Bel is not so easily pleased as me."

And in spite of her bad grammar Clitheroe smiled down on her with a very indulgent tenderness.

Meanwhile Suffield was marching along with his hand trustfully and affectionately on his son's shoulder. He was very proud of George; as he marched along the promenade and encountered some old friends he introduced him as the hope and stay of the House of Suffield. It being the "week-end," and the weather being fine, Suffield encountered in that walk more friends and acquaintances from Lancashire than he would have met in a month of Sundays at home. There were "Manchester men" and "Liverpool gentlemen," the former of whom greeted him heartily as "George," and the latter more distantly and reservedly as "Mr. Suffield." They were all lords of calico and cotton—cotton "made up" and cotton "raw"—and Suffield made known his son to all who did not already know him.

"This is my lad," said he, affectionately gripping his shoulder. "He is managing head o' the business now."

Those who did not know young George said they had heard of him; and they looked at him (the Liverpool "gentlemen" in particular) closely and shrewdly, as if what they had heard was not of a very reassuring character. George, whether he noted these looks or not, behaved as if he did not. He was, no doubt, a very handsome fellow of his type (which was the fair, florid Saxon, not markedly long in the leg nor thin in the flank), and he bore himself with a serene confidence, untouched with haughtiness, fronting the world as his father did—squarely and honestly. But as they marched along, a hideous foreigner, floridly dressed—a man who looked as if he had been buried and dug up again after he had begun to decay—saluted George with a very profound bow.

"Who's that, lad?" asked his father. "He is as ill-looking a scoundrel as I ever set eyes on."

"You should not judge a tree by its bark, dad," said George. "That is Gorgonio, a Levantine or a Persian or Assyrian, or something of that sort; but he is a capital broker—knows all the turns of the cotton game."

"Hast done business with him?" asked his father.

"A little," answered George.

"Hast dropped the firm's old brokers, then?" asked his father, with some concern. "I don't like leaving old friends, lad."

"No," said George, "I've not dropped them; but I don't give them all the business. They sent me some very bad cotton, and they didn't like my objecting to it."

And thus they went on to their lodgings, leaving Lord Clitheroe

at his hotel on the way. But before they left the Parade, George asked Isabel and the others if they would excuse him if he let them go on without him: he had caught sight of a man with whom he would like to have a word. So he left them and hung behind to intercept Mr. Gorgonio if he returned (as he expected he would) along the Parade. Presently Mr. Gorgonio came, and again saluted him.

"I guessed from your smile," said George, "that you had something to tell me. Am I right?"

"Quite right, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, in a thick, somewhat cavernous or sepulchral voice. "I had news this morning, and I intended to wire you on Monday when I go back to business in Liverpool. It is splendid news which I have got from a gentleman in Savannah which I trust very much indeed. But come into my hotel which is here, and I will show you his letter."

"Is it about prices or quantity?" asked George.

"What, Mr. Suffiel', do you think?" said Gorgonio. "Quantity, Mr. Suffiel'—quantity! But will not quantity touch prices? I t'ink so!"

When they sat down in a quiet corner of the coffee-room of the hotel, Gorgonio produced from his pocket-book (the faded leather of which looked of a piece with his skin) an American letter, which he handed to George. The gist of it was that, contrary to general expectation, the cotton crop would prove to be not an average but a very poor one, and that therefore those who meant to buy should buy at once before the fact was widely spread. There were reasons given and figures, which looked important and tangled, and which accordingly George took pretty much on trust. The announcement impressed him. In silence he handed back the letter, and in silence (but with a sharp eye) Gorgonio received it.

"I suppose," said George at length, "your correspondent knows what he is talking about?"

"Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, "there is no man which knows better. The price to-day for September delivery was," whispered he, leaning over the table and tapping on it with his nail, "only five and a half pence! Ah, what a beautiful, what a splendid corner I could make—more better than Morris Ranger's!—if I had but a little bit of money!" He glanced keenly at George, whose eyes were flitting thoughtfully about the opposite wall. "But no! I have not the money!"

"Will you wire to your office to-morrow morning," said George,

with resolution, "to buy as many Septembers as possible at five and a half?"

"Wire!" exclaimed Gorgonio. "Never! Never! In half an hour—in ten minutes!—after the wire has been delivered at my office every one knows it, and every one runs on The Flags to buy Septembers, and the price go up! Never! Never wire! We will wait till Monday, Mr. Suffiel'. I do not t'ink it will be any difference. Maybe"—and Mr. Gorgonio very knowingly put his finger to his nose—"the price will be lower than five and a half."

"On Monday, then, first thing," said George, rising and giving his hand to Gorgonio. "And I will come along to you after I have docked my yacht."

"On Monday, then, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio. "His yacht!" murmured he, looking after George. "Never mind, Gorgonio, some day you also will have a yacht."

George hurried off to his parents' lodgings, and when all went out to enjoy the cool of the day, after dinner, he and Isabel chanced to walk together. Isabel had felt that George looked coldly on her, and now she gathered the reason. She spoke first of the small legacy which Uncle Harry had left to Daniel Trichinopoly, his faithful black servant, and that led her to speak of something else.

"By-the-way," said she, "Mr. Ainsworth wrote to you—did he not?—a little while ago about a curious kind of adventure he had with Daniel in a strange place. What have you done about it—anything?"

"I acknowledged the receipt of Mr. Ainsworth's communication," answered George.

"That's all?" said Isabel. "Did you not think there was anything worth taking notice of in the story he told you? I thought there was."

"You knew it, then?"

"I knew it. Mr. Ainsworth told me when he came back from the place; I had asked him to bring my father from there. Did you really read his letter?"

"Yes," said George, with a manifest blush; "I ran through it. It seemed to me he was just setting down the ravings of a maniac. Most absurd. Perhaps it was Daniel, perhaps it wasn't, though of course Daniel was in London at the time; he had gone up to travel with Uncle Harry. In any case, I suppose the talk of a man in an opium sleep is not worth attention. A man has visions, and he tries to describe them, that's all."

"George," said Isabel, very seriously, "what is the matter with you? You used to like Alan Ainsworth, and to admire him and his work. Now you don't; and when he writes what he means to be a friendly letter you throw it in the fire—no, it is summer-time; you tear it up into little pieces and throw it into the waste-paper basket."

"I did not tear it up at once," said George, rather sulkily. "But I didn't ask for his letter; it was meddlesome in him to write it."

"George," repeated Isabel, "you don't like Alan. Why?"

"I *don't* like him!" said George. "Above all, I don't like your calling him 'Alan!'"

"Don't shout, George!" said Isabel.

"And I don't like," continued he, evidently feeling that he had broached the subject and caught its full flow—"I don't like his being about with you and your father so much. You may not perceive it, but in the sly way those literary fellows know how to work he has been making love to you! It's not fair, Bel!"

"Don't be absurd, George," said Isabel, now very serious indeed. "Mr. Ainsworth has been a very good friend to me in London. He has helped me with my father in a way I can never be grateful enough for. He is alone in London, and I *asked* him to come and see me and my father—I *asked* him!—and we have talked and been friendly. And that is all. Really," added she, after a moment's silence and reflection, "I don't know why I humble myself to give you this long explanation!"

"You know well enough why you do it, Bel," said George; "because you know that, if I have spoken as I have done, and said disagreeable things about Ainsworth, it is only because I love you, and nobody but you!"

"Hush!" said Isabel. "Lord Clitheroe and Phemy are behind us. And I believe they are laughing at us; they seem so tickled with something."

On the next day (which was Saturday) the race took place between the male and female yachts. It was not a public event. The vessels stole away together—the *Swift-sure* and the *Seamew*—and turned, the one to the north and the other to the south, without any persons but those on board being aware of their purpose. Isabel would have preferred to try the effect of the bird-like motion of the *Seamew*, but George had asked her to voyage with him, and she thought she ought to indulge him so far. Mr. Suf-

field was also of George's company, while Mrs. Suffield and Euphemia were with Lord Clitheroe. Mr. Raynor and Alexander had no stomach for a sea-voyage; they preferred, they said, to lie in the sun and breeze on Douglas Head. Lord Clitheroe was skipper of his own craft, while George, who had not yet acquired a certificate of navigation, had to have a sailing-master. For all that, he was not idle; and Isabel could not but admire the single-minded energy with which he set himself to win the race. He had little thought or attention to give, for the time, to anything else. His brows were set in a steady frown of resolution, and he was alert and ready to lend a hand wherever it was needed; and, though he was not a certificated navigator, he knew enough of what had to be done to see at once when his help was of most avail. A breeze from the west was blowing, and it was determined to use what sail they could as well as steam.

"But is that quite fair?" asked Isabel.

"We did not bargain to use steam only," answered George. "Clitheroe knows we can carry sail, and he must know, therefore, we would not be such fools as not to do all we can to win."

"Quite so," said his father. "Oh yes, Isabel; I think George is right. If Clitheroe did not expect it, it would be different."

So George was now hauling on a sheet, now examining the log-line to see how many knots they were making, and now shovelling coal out of the bunkers handy for the stoker to throw into the furnace. And the engine throbbed and sighed, and the sharp little ship trembled with eagerness, and cut its way through the green water, boring ahead with an intense but subdued rocking motion.

Only over luncheon did George rest. He was in good spirits, and inclined to be light-minded about Isabel's fortune. He asked her what she was going to do with it, and she answered that she had several plans for getting rid of her large yearly income, but none was quite matured. She was more reserved with George on these matters than she had been with Ainsworth; she thought herself it was strange that she was not at all tempted to take George into her confidence.

"You should put your money into the business, Bel," said George (and he seemed to mean it). "I could give you fifteen or twenty per cent. for it; and then you would have at least ten thousand a year instead of three or four."

"But," said she, looking somewhat surprised and alarmed, "I

don't want ten thousand a year; I find the responsibility of three or four quite enough."

"No, no, George," said Mr. Suffield. "Let Bel's brass alone. We won't put it in the business. Harry had it very well and safely invested, and we'll let well alone; besides, Bel can't for so long reinvest anything without the consent of her executor and trustee, and I'm that person. Just pass me the claret, lad."

The two yachts passed and hailed each other off the ancient town and castle of Peel.

"Oh, doesn't she look lovely and living," exclaimed Isabel, looking after the *Seamew*, "like a great sea-bird with her great white wings spread!"

"She sails well," said George, "and she has good wind; she'll take a great deal of beating"—and he turned away to shovel more coal into the furnace.

Isabel was still bound to admire his single-minded devotion to the business in hand; though her uncle considered (and expressed to her his conviction) that George, since he had her for a guest, should have paid her unremitting attention.

"When I was young," said he, "the lads would have given anything to have had a young lady on a jaunt with them; but the lads nowadays seem about as polite as a collier. Tha knowst th' story," he continued, with a chuckle, lapsing into his dear dialect, "o' th' pit-lad that opened th' gate for a lady riding along on horseback. 'Oh,' says th' lady, 'what a polite boy you are! You surely can't be fro' these parts!' 'Thou'rt a liar!' says the lad. 'I be!' That was a real Lancashire pit-lad!"

Isabel laughed, as she always did at her uncle's stories, which were racy of the grime and smoke of Lancashire, and which did not respect persons; but she protested that she thought that George had behaved uncommonly well on the voyage; he had attended to his duty and to little else.

That night, the race being won by George by some fifteen minutes (when George steamed into Douglas harbor the white wings of the *Seamew* were just visible off Laxey), the whole company dined in the rooms of the Suffields; and afterwards Mr. Suffield observed to his wife, "I think I must wake up our George; he is not nearly so attentive to Isabel as he ought to be in all reason."

"Don't meddle and spoil, my dear," said his wife. "You are a dear, good man, but you don't see any farther than the end of the nose on your face. You had much better leave George alone."

CHAPTER XXV

ISABEL'S PROGRESS

"FORTUNATE," says the old chronicler, "is the country that has no annals," but fortunate is *not* the story that has no incident. "Emotion in action" must be the maxim of the story-teller even as it is of the dramatist; emotion, therefore, that is unexpressed in action is scarcely tangible enough material for the novelist or dramatist to deal with; it is fitter for the treatment of the rhapsodist or philosopher. Yet there are periods in otherwise active lives that are charged merely with ordinary feeling and desire, with growing knowledge and experience; what is he who undertakes to tell the story of these lives to make of such periods? He finds it hard to write about them except in such a way as makes the reader inclined to skip them; and yet they are of the greatest importance; they are like the pools or quiet stretches of water in the course of a stream, which reflect heaven and seem as deep as the foundations of the earth, and which give volume and force to the next sweep and rush and swirl of current.

Isabel had now entered upon one of these periods. The six weeks or so of holiday which she allowed herself passed quickly and pleasantly with baths in the sea, walks to Kirk Braddan and over Douglas Head, drives over high, breezy moorland to Sulby Glen, Peel, Ramsay, Port St. Mary, and Port Erin, and sea trips now in the *Seamew* and now in the *Swift-sure*; for George came regularly on the Friday afternoon in his yacht and returned on the Monday morning. He was persistent in his desire and demand for races with Lord Clitheroe's yacht, and was loud in his resolve to put new and powerful engines in his own to make it the swiftest thing that moved in water. Isabel was compelled to be interested in him and his doings, and, considering his pretensions towards her, to study him with intention. She found him boyish, if not boisterous, in manner, like a lad escaped for a holiday; with a strong appreciation of the substantial fare of life, of all things that can be bought with cash or a check; with fine physical health,

and a sturdy confidence in his own judgment; affectionate, but scarcely deferential, to his father, whom he plainly considered somewhat old-fashioned, and whom he called "dad." Thus George appeared to Isabel, and she was not sure whether she liked the presentment; on the whole, she thought she did not, and she frequently found herself, before she was aware, making George stand in her mind beside Alan Ainsworth. She wondered if George had just developed those qualities and characteristics which now marked him, or if he had always had them, and she merely had not noticed them; but, if he had shown them, must she not have noticed them? She concluded that the high position of importance and responsibility to which his father had recently raised him had brought out more strongly qualities which had always been his. But it must be said George did not force the study of himself upon her. He talked with her, laughed with her, and was generally attentive to her, but he did not notoriously seek her company, and, after the one small outburst which I have recorded, he did not say anything to her that was charged with special feeling; all which piqued her somewhat, for she was a woman, and no woman—not even a sensible and clear-seeing girl like Isabel—likes a man who pretends to be overwhelmingly in love with her to behave as if he were indifferent, however indifferent she herself may be.

Thus pleasantly and quickly passed the days and weeks till the middle of September, when the whole party said farewell to the Isle of Man. It was only at the last moment of adieu that George showed he still had a memory.

"When," said he, "shall we meet again, Bel? Shall I come to town at Christmas, or will you come North? A year," he added, "will be a terribly long time"—with clear allusion to the year and a day which were to date from the previous Whitsuntide.

The Suffields, as well as Isabel and her father, returned to London; for there was to be an autumn session of Parliament, and a kind of half or veiled season of society. The session did not actually begin till the second week of October, until which time Lord Clitheroe went shooting. It was a kind of open secret that with the reassembling of Parliament his engagement to Euphemia should be formally recognized, and there was something of a flutter in the family accordingly.

What with these matters and her own arrangements for settling down to the enjoyment of her wealth in proper form, Isabel was fully occupied for two or three weeks after her return to London.

She went back to her old lodgings in the Marylebone Road for a little while (she declined, though invited, to go to Rutland Gate with her father), until she had found a flat and bought enough furniture to enter upon its occupation. Her final good-bye to Mrs. Wiffin was affecting. Isabel kissed her and thanked her for all her solicitude in the past.

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Wiffin, crying a little, "you might have been my own daughter, I liked you so well. And thankful I am that nothing but good-luck has come to you under my roof. But, oh, the world is full of snares and trials, and I hope that now you won't get into any of them, if it ain't presumptuous in me to say so. And you'll come and see me sometimes?"

Isabel had found for herself a delightful flat—or, at least, a flat which she intended to make delightful—in a block in Cromwell Road. The more substantial and necessary furniture she had, of course, to acquire at once to render it merely habitable; but such things as would make it a pleasant place to live in she set herself to seek out, to select, and buy by degrees. It was, and continued to be for months, a minor harmonic joy of her daily existence to journey into strange regions of London and visit the unlikeliest shops in her quest for treasures of one kind and another. She found, for instance, a fine Japanese Buddha in bronze in a marine dealer's in the East End; a finely carved Chinese table in ebony and ivory in an old curiosity-shop in Lambeth; and a beautiful Teniers in a picture-shop in Hammersmith. Nor did she disdain to look at the more pretentious and dearer wares of the shops of Regent Street, Piccadilly, and Bond Street. She took her father with her on these expeditions, on the pretence of putting herself under his protection; and he was immensely pleased with his responsibility, although invariably when active responsibility or decision had to be shown, as in crossing a street or calling a cab, it was she that was to the fore.

At the same time, she was not forgetting her scheme for the benefit of aged governesses. She did not begin with the display of a prospectus and a subscription-list; she intended that the institution should be all her own; she even thought that for the present she would dispense with the aid of her proposed committee of gentlemen; for she was shy of discussing her plans with any one, and she wished to be, if she could contrive it, merely a kind of beneficent daughter to a few of those who had grown old, gray, and lonely in the thankless occupation to which she herself

had given the spring of her days. The formality of the ordinary charitable institution, with its painfully regular habits and rules, with its generally barrack-like existence, she abhorred; such arrangements she resolved she would not have for her aged; they would make them feel too much as if they themselves were now put to school; they would, she was sure, be resented in secret, and she knew that dislike of what you should appear grateful for tends to create a hideous hypocritical temper. Therefore her regulations would be loose and elastic; her aged should feel comfortable and at home; and to that end—and also because her income would not bear the expense of a large institution—she took a modest and cheerful house in Chelsea, sufficient to accommodate some ten persons, and no more. She intended that her *protégées* should do the light work of the household themselves—it would do them good to be occupied a little in that way; and she believed (judging by herself) that they would like to be so occupied, and therefore she introduced no great establishment of servants. She herself would be the governing head of the household, and her resident deputy was to be Miss Brown, the aged governess who had been the friend of her youth in the Yorkshire school to which her aunt had sent her.

She carried her arrangements through so unhesitatingly that by the beginning of November she had five aged vestals (including Miss Brown) established in the Chelsea house; and since her own abode was also now in a fairly presentable condition, and since her friends and relations had been for some time asking her when she was going to begin to receive visitors, she determined to give a “house-warming” on the day dedicated to the memory of Guy Fawkes.

Her dining-room was not large enough to entertain a numerous company. The party at dinner made only an octave, but it was an harmonious octave: Isabel and her father (Alexander had respectfully declined the invitation; feasts and large gatherings, he said, did not agree with his constitution, and, moreover, he had no raiment splendid enough to do her honor), her uncle and aunt, Phemy and Lord Clitheroe, Ainsworth and Miss Brown—Miss Brown’s charges, the aged vestals, were coming in later in their best ancient bibs and tuckers.

“You might have asked a young woman, my dear,” whispered Mrs. Suffield to her niece, “to meet Mr. Ainsworth—Miss Bruno, the novelist, for instance. Miss Brown may be nice and in-

tellectual, but she is scarcely the person to set a young man down with."

"I didn't think of that!" said Isabel. Could it be, she wondered, that Mr. Ainsworth might desire and take pleasure in the society of a young woman—a young woman other than herself, that is? It smote her with a strange pang that he might.

Yet Mr. Ainsworth found great pleasure in sitting next to Miss Brown, who was one of those old maids that make us wonder at the perversity and stupidity of men in choosing mates. She had probably never been asked in marriage; yet it would have been difficult for a man to find a woman who would have been a wiser, tenderer, or more cheerful companion through life. She had never been handsome; she was little, thin, and dry, but there was in her a suggestion of past pleasantness of face and figure such as resides in a Normandy pippin. She had intellect and vivacity, and such an array of learning, and withal so much modesty in the display of it, as put Ainsworth to shame. She knew the works of French authors through and through—it was she who had given Isabel her taste for the literature of France—and she had known Frederic Lemaitre (who had taught her elocution) and the great Dumas. She told Ainsworth strange and vivacious stories of these two worthies, to his immense delight and benefit. She discussed French plays with him, and Ainsworth was moved to confide to her the secret that he was trying to write a play. Then she ventured to express to him decided and well-matured opinions of how a play was to be made, and advised him to study Sardou for construction, and Labiche for good-nature.

"What a perfect treasure—a *thesaurus*!—your Miss Brown is!" exclaimed Ainsworth to Isabel, when they had all returned to the drawing-room. "She ought to be editing a review instead of supervising your aged?"

"Yes," said Isabel, mischievously, "she knows all about plays, too—doesn't she?—and can advise about the making of them."

"Yes; she can!" said Ainsworth, with a fine blush.

"And she is so charming and versatile," added Isabel, "that she can win the confidence of an ambitious dramatist at their first meeting!"

Ainsworth considered her closely a moment: "Did she tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"That I had confided to her that I am writing a play?"

"Oh no; I heard you tell her. And," said she, with an involuntary touch of pique, "I thought it a little odd that I should not have heard of it before. I—" ("Used to hear all you were doing," she was about to add, but she refrained.)

"I meant to keep the matter secret," said he. "But, indeed, it is not much of a secret. I am only trying; I shall very likely fail."

She was silent, and he was silent—though he looked at her as if he would speak. He had it in his mind to confess that he had made a secret of the writing of the play, because he meant it as a means of raising him to her level; he was resolved to win her, but he would only ask her to put her hand in his when he was in a position equal, or almost equal, to hers, and for a writing man to attain such a position in these days he believed the stage was the only gangway. But he did not say that; he said something else instead.

"You remember," said he, with a tender smile, "those strange lines I heard your father murmur when I went to bring him from that opium-place?—'Raynor of gold and jewels; Raynor of silver and pearls.' I often think of them, and wonder if your father had a vision of your coming wealth—saw that you were going to be a Ranee. 'Raynor?' In your case it ought to be '*Reine d'or*.' I think we must call you '*Reine d'or*' (queen of gold)."

"That comes," said Isabel, "of talking so much about French things with Miss Brown. But," she added, taking his persiflage with unusual seriousness, "why are you always talking of my gold? Why does my wealth dwell so in your mind? Is that not a little vulgar? Forgive my saying so; but has my poor wealth made any difference in me? Am I not the same to my friends as I have always been? I wish to be! I hope I am!"

"You are—you are, Miss Raynor," asseverated Ainsworth. "You are always generous and frank and good! It is vulgar, of course, to consider wealth too much; but—I cannot help thinking of it. Forgive me. I need your forgiveness, and your indulgence!"

"Try," said she, seriously, "to think I am as I was; and let us say no more about it."

They were then driven apart by the influx of after-dinner guests, among whom were the aged in their best raiment. That was a proud evening for them; for not only were they there on an equal footing with such people as they had been wont to serve and to cringe a little to—wealthy people, and people of title, like Lord Clith-

eroe and his mother, Lady Padiham; but they actually saw in the flesh some artists and authors of whom they had hitherto only heard. Their crowning triumph, however, was when one of themselves (the versatile Miss Brown), at the request of their hostess and protectress, rose and recited in the most laughably dramatic manner (she had been taught by an eminent French actor) a French "piece" ("Le Curé de Cucugnan," of M. Alphonse Daudet)—recited it with so beautiful a French accent that those who understood French applauded with extreme enthusiasm, and those who did not understand applauded as much as those who did, so that they might not be considered slack in good-manners nor backward in education.

They came and they went, and at midnight Isabel sat again alone in her drawing-room; her father had gone to his room an hour before. Her house had been warmed by the friendly breath of thirty or forty relations, friends, and acquaintances; she might now reckon herself established as a person of some consequence; but as she looked round the room and thought who had sat here and who there, and how flat and unsatisfactory it had all been, she found herself recalling with especial delight those summer evenings, not so very long ago, when Ainsworth would drop into her Marylebone lodgings and straightway plunge into talk of great books and great things—talk into the rush and swirl of which she also would be caught, while Alexander would sit by with the air of a philosopher whose knowledge of the matters being discussed was too deep for words. Those days were gone, and they were better than these!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MIGRATION OF TAME PHILOSOPHY

BUT while affairs in London thus moved smoothly and with a comfortable lack of interest, matters in Lancashire were excited to a degree which presently wrought great consequences on all concerned in this history. George Suffield, even during his weeks of sailing to and fro to the Isle of Man, had committed himself seriously to speculation in cotton. Before the holiday season he had had several successful deals through Tanderjee and Gorgonio, but their success had been quite eclipsed by that ventured on (and noted in a former chapter) by the advice of Gorgonio. His speculation in Septembers enriched him in a very few days by about two thousand pounds: he bought, through Gorgonio, at $5\frac{1}{2}$ — i. e., at $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ per pound—and sold again within a fortnight at $6\frac{7}{8}$. Thus elated and made confident, before even the end of August he began to buy largely of Octobers and Novembers (still through Gorgonio), with the intention of holding; for Mr. Gorgonio's longing for a "corner" in cotton had not been uttered in inattentive ears. The truth is, George had caught the fever of speculation—and caught it badly; besides attractive feelings of danger and excitement, it created dreams of vast wealth to be realized in a few months, visions of ease and luxury, love and idleness, with the one adorable woman of the world sitting queen of all. That Isabel was always first in his thoughts, that all his design was for her ultimate adornment and delectation, redeems George's aberration into this doubtful course from the suspicion of sordidness and vulgarity. He was the kind of lover who is not demonstrative in word or gesture, but who expresses himself in gifts; and his designs for gifts were magnificent, though they were not love. The methods, however, by which he was led on and tempted to arrive at the fulfilment of his designs, and the toils in which he became snared, are of such prodigious moment that they must be dealt with fully by themselves. But first it is necessary to relate one or two matters connected therewith.

Daniel Trichinopoly had been so affected and scared by the dumb death-bed confidences of his late master that he had determined (almost) to forswear Tanderjee and Gorgonio, and with the tolerable wealth which the Sahib Raynor had conferred on him—the gratuity of fifty pounds, and the legacy of fifty pounds more—to return over-sea to his native place. But his new master had received him back with such signal favor (George, indeed, had missed Daniel, and having seen how Uncle Harry must have trusted him, had repented of his own suspicions), and his new master had so loudly opposed his expressed desire that he might “go away” that he remained. It was inevitable that Daniel, having thus far yielded to temptation, should return to Tanderjee, and that Tanderjee should remind him with tears of the “beautiful” tricks they had intended to play together, with the result that the impression of the Sahib Raynor’s death-bed became fainter and fainter, and that the last case of Daniel was worse than his first. Precious time had been lost, and Daniel became angrily impatient to attain his ends. The most pressing and important of these was not only to become acquainted with the new Suffield machinery, but to get at the plans of it, of which Daniel was prepared to make “tracing copies.” But he could do nothing for fear of “the old Guru.” He had discovered that the Tame Philosopher now frequented nightly that part of the clough about the counting-house, and he was certain that he was on the watch. Had it been another but the Guru that was prowling around, Daniel would have been bold enough and clever enough to have made his way into the office under the watcher’s nose, but in Daniel’s eyes the Guru was the keenest-nosed of detectives and the most powerful of wizards. Daniel, therefore, could do nothing while the Guru blocked the way. Moreover, the Guru made such long and sonorous speeches without contradiction that Daniel, who understood nothing of them, had an altogether absurd idea of the importance and influence of the Guru in the counsels of Sahib George. These considerations made him strain every faculty and craft to be rid of the presence of the Tame Philosopher.

He dropped this and that tale (not altogether untrue) into the “respectable Mister George’s” private ear of the opprobrious thing the Guru had said, or was reported to have said, concerning his “dear master,” so that the Tame Philosopher was asked to dinner no more, and Mr. George, when he met him, passed him with the merest word, cold and curt; and, last of all, he told the

"respectable Mister George" that he had caught the Guru, on a certain occasion when he had come up to the hall to interview Mr. George, listening at the library door when he (Mr. George) and Mr. Gorgonio were talking of cotton and of "corners." After that Mr. George refused to see the Tame Philosopher—he had never liked him; and he was glad of an excuse to be rid of him. But he was scarcely prepared for the immediate, and still less for a consequent, result. The immediate result was the Tame Philosopher's migration to London, which came about in this way: McFie wrote to the senior Suffield a remarkable letter, the purpose of which dimly peered through the end of it. The letter is too extraordinary and too characteristic of the Tame Philosopher to be omitted:

"MY DEAR FRIEND," he wrote,—"*Contentment* comes not in the order of nature. Unlike the apostle, I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be *discontent*. I am never in perfect correlation with the conditions assigned to me in this tarrying-place. I feel stirring within me—do we not all do so?—faculties that suggest other states of being than the present—and that continually. While here I am yonder; to-day I live in to-morrow; in Lancashire I live in London. Discontent and restlessness are our divine prerogatives—they are the daily annunciation of our superiority to whatever time can give or take away; they are the evidence of faculties born for immortality. The ephemeron is content with the leaf it feeds on; the spirit embodied in the ephemeron, presentient of the winged life of a higher state, feels in its divinest moments, in the fine tumults of the heart, the flutter of the wings of the imprisoned angel. The soul, resenting the limits of time, stirs restlessly, as if before ripe for flying it would shake from off it the superincumbent pressure of the terrestrial, and wing its way to the clime in which there are

"'No fears to beat away, no strifes to heal,
The past unsighed for, and the future sure.'

"Deafened as it is by the roar and tumult of life, it hears in the inmost shrine of its temple still small voices speaking of a peace that is to be. The immortal pilgrim journeying to an abiding city, in a far-off country, can find no rest in any temporary tarrying-place. His malady of longing is incurable—he hungers for ambrosial food. Pour out for him, as from some bountiful cornucopia, any abundance of good things, and you cannot content

him. Give him in the near future a paradise, and he will climb its bounding wall to gaze into the far-away unexplored spaces stretching to the horizon.

“‘It is the distant and the dim
That we are sick to greet.’

“But there is a time for all things. There should be a time to be content and a time to be discontent. When a man’s condition in life is clearly what he must accept as the lot appointed him for good and all, then he gives proof of weakness by kicking against it; but when it is not, then he *ought* to kick—then, as Jonah did well to be angry, so he does well to be discontent.” And so forth and so on for four pages closely written in a small hand. At length the end came thus: “Behold how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. Take it as evidence of the longing I have to see you. I am tired of the money-making, the money-talk, and the mammon-worship of this place; I pant to be mingling with larger issues of life, to see often your happy face, dear George Suffield, and to frequently colloque with ‘A man’s a man for a’ that’ like yourself. There must be many little things in which I might be of aid to you—questions and turns of public policy—and I think my power of pen has not quite deserted me since I was a gay young fellow in London—near forty years ago, my dear! near forty years ago!—sporting with Fate! Ah, me!

“Yours, wishing you in health and wealth long to live,

“EBENEZER MCFIE.”

The meaning of all that was not difficult to find. It was expressible in two sentences: “I am tired of this. Won’t you invite me to come to you?” Suffield apprehended the meaning at once, and being a kindly and generous creature, and having a simple admiration of tame philosophy, he was well disposed to grant the philosopher’s request. Moreover, having no very intimate acquaintance with the arts of composition and of style, he regarded the writing of the Tame Philosopher as very eloquent and fine, and the Tame Philosopher himself as a neglected genius. He therefore resolved what he would do. He needed a secretary—every public man should have a secretary. He would invite his old friend to be his secretary, and his old friend would aid him in the invention and the writing of those speeches on great questions which his wife so longed that he should deliver.

Thus it came about in less than a week after Suffield had received the above letter the Tame Philosopher left Lancashire and established himself as secretary in Rutland Gate, with a lodging in the Brompton Road. Then came the subsequent result unlooked for by Mr. George.

The Tame Philosopher lost no time in looking up his young friend Mr. Alan Ainsworth; for he considered that, besides being secretary to a politician, and partly on that account, he was eminently fitted to utter opinions on public questions, and that his eloquent style was certain to fascinate the London people, and to bring himself the reputation and content for which his soul did pine.

One evening, therefore, when Ainsworth was rumpling his hair and tugging his mustache over his work, the philosopher was unexpectedly ushered in.

"You are busy, my dear young friend," said he, sitting down. "It is well to be busy, but not too busy. I would adopt Solomon's maxim, and say, 'Be not busy overmuch'!"

"Yes; I am rather busy," said Ainsworth, tapping his teeth with the handle of his pen; he found, presently, that he might lay his pen down, for the philosopher had come to stay.

"You are occupied, I dare say," said the philosopher, with one of those lucubrations for the daily press, which truly mean so little, but which are taken by the ignorant to mean so much."

"Upon my word, he is flattering!" said Ainsworth to himself; but aloud he said, "As it happens, I am occupied with something that will be taken probably to mean less than one of those lucubrations."

"A strange and wonderful thing," continued the philosopher, as if resolved to give Ainsworth a proper taste of his quality, "is the influence of the diurnal Press! It receives its material from all quarters of the globe; all the day long its news comes silently, flying in like birds on the wing, flowing in like streams of tendency; all the night through while the world sleeps it manipulates its stuff; its machines grind it all up—and sometimes they grind it exceeding small; and then in the stilly hour of dawn it opens forth its *enchyvomitories*, and pours out upon an expectant world that which it has manufactured!"

("Enchyvomitories"—so Ainsworth spelled it to himself—was a very puzzling expression. Ainsworth could not guess what its meaning might be: could he, he asked himself, so utterly have

forgotten his Greek and his Latin? The word puzzled him all the evening. He carried it with him to bed, and went to sleep thinking of it; and in the silent watches of the night he woke and said to himself, "He meant *Inky vomitories*!" Which should show the profound impression made by the philosopher upon his young friend.)

"My paper," said Ainsworth, in the meantime, "is an evening paper. So it does its grinding all through the unmysterious morning, and opens forth its *what's-his-names* at noisy noon."

That was the philosopher's opportunity, and, after a complimentary remark or two concerning the quality in his estimation of Ainsworth's paper, he launched his proposal.

"Do you know," said he, "that I have what should be a fruitful idea, and I am willing to offer it to you for the benefit of your paper. I shall write a weekly article—I think the form of a letter would be best—giving my opinion of the world to the world, what I think of its silliness, its folly, its chicanery, and its villany. I am now in the very midst of things political; and I have sounded to the bottom the working of Lancashire industry, and understand all its villanies."

"What, by-the-way," asked Ainsworth, with some hope of diverting or defeating the philosopher's evident intention of asking employment from him, "has become of my pet villain, Daniel Trichinopoly?"

"Oh," said the philosopher, "Daniel seems to be very well, and is certainly flourishing exceedingly under the *ægis* of the house of Suffield. How exactly he is occupied I do not know; but he is deep in the confidence of Mr. Suffield the younger, and he seems to have great influence over him. I may say, without prejudice to humanity in general, or to the race to which he belongs in particular, that I do not like Daniel, or trust him. He appears to be a child of light, but in reality, I fear, he is a creature of darkness: he has a notorious devil in his eye, and I doubt his end will not be peace with honor."

"Do you think," said Ainsworth, remembering his experience of Daniel in the opium-den, "that he is engaged in some villany?"

"That," answered the philosopher, "I would not venture to say. But he is prodigiously interested in cotton, like his master; and there is room in that for plenty of villany. And, talking of cotton, my dear young friend, I would like to write for you an article on 'corners' in cotton."

"What exactly is a cotton 'corner'?" asked Ainsworth.

"Well, my dear young sir, I'll explain by analogy. In Egypt, in the olden days, Joseph made a 'corner' in grain: he bought up all the grain he could lay hands on and held it till people had to go to him and buy at whatever price he chose to sell. That was a notable 'corner.'"

"Well," said Ainsworth, "write your article, and I'll submit it. I'm not editor, you know."

"Oh," said the philosopher, with brutal frankness, "I had thought you were. And yet," he laughed, "this abode is scarcely suited to the dignity of an able editor."

"It suits a sub very well, however," said Ainsworth, with a blush. "But is it not beneath the dignity of a philosopher to judge a man by his abode? Did not Diogenes dwell in a tub!"

"True, sir, true," said the philosopher.

The end was that the Tame Philosopher wrote his article on cotton "corners;" wrote it, moreover, as one who had special knowledge of the subject; wrote it with particular mention of a "corner" that was imminent in Lancashire, in which certain foreigners of Levantine and Indian origin would probably be found concerned. And the article was published and widely quoted and commented on (in Liverpool especially); and it was read by (among others) the elder Suffield, who wrote straightway to his son and put such questions as these: Do you know anything from hearsay of this "corner?" Have you made any provision of stock against it? And do you think it likely that your ugly foreign broker—Levantine or something—whom we met that day in the Isle of Man has anything to do with it?

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GREAT COTTON GAME

How the Tame Philosopher had guessed at the existence or imminence of a "corner" in cotton not even he himself could ever adequately explain or understand. Of course he made many attempts to rationalize his view, but in sum they seemed only to suggest that he had arrived at something very near the truth by the "lucky fluke" which occasionally justifies the pronouncement of the sporting or the political tipster. But George Suffield was angry and alarmed. He was angry because he knew (for his father told him) that McFie had written the article, and the thought that McFie knew far more than he possibly could know; that being a philosopher, metaphysical, prying, secretive, and crafty, he had argued out a conclusion, which in truth, like many a philosopher, he had only blundered on. And he was alarmed, because he feared that the incipient "corner" might be spoiled by the shyness of operators on 'Change, and that his own design might be ruined and his father somehow might learn the whole business. He therefore wrote to Mr. Gorgonio advising great caution in buying up "futures" (though he would suggest not so much that he should restrict purchases as "spread them out small among a great many people"), and declaring that it would be better thenceforward that he should not be publicly seen with Gorgonio, but that communications between them should be by letter, or through Mr. Tanderjee or Daniel Trichinopoly. Nevertheless, one final confidential interview he thought they might have, to settle an important point: "Shall we continue to think of a corner, or shall we not?" and he begged Mr. Gorgonio to come on a certain evening to dinner to meet Mr. Tanderjee and to stay the night.

On a certain evening, then, the three sat at dinner in Holdsworth Hall, and gradually grew more flushed and gay with the excellent meats and drinks that were set before them. Daniel waited upon them, and as he moved with soft self-possession and an easy

smile behind their chairs, and as they ate and drank and talked, it really seemed as if Daniel were the only person there and the others were puppets which he cleverly manipulated. And there was some truth in the appearance; for the three had been first brought together by him to play a game which he had suggested. And still they talked, eager and undistracted, and Daniel's soft and assured movements and his superior smile of knowledge and understanding made him more and more seem as if he controlled the puppets, and worked them for the amusement of an invisible audience. And this was the conversation of moment in which Daniel seemed especially concerned.

"We have done a good deal of business together, Mr. Gorgonio," said George, expansively, "and you have never led me wrong; not once have I lost a farthing through you; not only have I lost nothing, but I have made a good deal. I take this opportunity, Gorgonio, of acknowledging it."

George put his hand to his glass; Daniel noiselessly approached and filled it, and then filled that of Gorgonio, and the two puppets bowed to each other; Gorgonio murmured, "A vot' santé;" and Daniel smiled his approval as they both raised their glasses and drank.

"It is only," said Gorgonio, "that you have not the time to advise yourself, Mr. Suffield! You have all the business at the ends of your fingers, and you could do it better as me if you had not other business to occupy you."

"At any rate," said George, not ill-pleased with the compliment paid to his business sagacity, "you have the advantage of me, Mr. Gorgonio, in having your head completely occupied with this, and in being always on the spot, keeping your eye on every turn of the game, which I cannot do."

"And so," said Gorgonio, "with my eye on the turn and the twist, on the up and the down, on the bull and the bear, I buy for you—futures, futures only; there is no game of cotton at all, no lovely and noble speculation without futures."

"That is quite so," said Mr. Tanderjee, flashing his spectacles upon the other puppets.

"I think," said Gorgonio, with a smile, "we quite understand each other. What, Mr. Suffiel', is your opinion of the present state of the cotton market? Ha, ha!"

"We stand pretty well, don't we? We hold contracts for 80,000 bales of the December-January deliveries, do we not?"

"Contracts, Mr. Suffiel', for 90,000 December-Januaries!" exclaimed Gorgonio. "I bought 10,000 more to-day! Now see here, Mr. Suffiel'! Mark my word! Not a single one bale will be tendered in December! Because why, Mr. Suffiel'? Because, sir, we are in November, and there is no more than 90,000 bales in the whole city, and the stock will be not much more in December, because not so much cotton will come in as people expect (I have show you the American crop is shorter than they think), and we keep our advantage by buying. If on the 31st of December there is no more than 100,000 bales in Liverpool, and we hold contracts for 90,000 still, then, Mr. Suffiel', we control the market!"

"I want to do more than control the market," answered George, expanding his chest; "I want to rule it."

"Go on with corner? Ah, if you do that!" exclaimed Gorgonio. "Ah!" he sighed, and his eye flashed. And Tanderjee murmured "Ah!" and his eye flashed behind his spectacles; but Daniel behind them all only smiled with superior benignity, like a bronze Buddha.

"What I should like to do," said George, moving his glasses about meditatively, "is to lay a strong foundation with American and build with Indian." It was the very idea which had been slowly infiltrated into him by the suave and subtle Daniel, and yet Daniel smiled in the suavest and supremest unconsciousness.

"That is the way!" exclaimed Gorgonio. "Foundation with American; build with Indian! That is new; that is original! That will do!"

Yet it was not new to him; for the plan had long been settled between the precious trio of Asiatics.

"I have particularly fixed on Indian," said George, "because it is little used in our Lancashire mills, and the holding of it won't touch our Lancashire folk much.

It had not been for that reason *they* had fixed on Indian, but Gorgonio assented to it.

"That is so," said he. "It will touch the Russians and the Chermans. Well, now, here is Mr. Tanderjee. He is the gentleman as knows all about Indian cotton, and as is in a moment ready to deal direct with his people in Bombay, and buy direct for you any amount. Speak, Mr. Tanderjee. Is it not so?"

"It is quite so, Mr. Suffiel'," said Tanderjee, bowing and smiling. "It is this way, Mr. Suffiel': My people in Bombay always send the cotton what they buy to Liverpool; but it is better as

you should be able to buy up, at less, what is certain to come than wait till it is on the market, at more."

"And," said George, "your people will sell their cotton to me at less really than they would get if they put it on the market?"

"Because why, Mr. Suffiel'," said Tanderjee, beaming through his spectacles and smiling; "my people is poor, and Mr. Suffiel' is rich; it is the saying of the wise that the man who has much does get more. My people are not able to wait for their money till the market give it. I have just been advise of a cargo they wish to send, and as to which they wish me to get an advance for them."

"What terms?" asked George.

"Fivepence a pound, I think," answered Tanderjee, "and three-fourths of price advanced. It is very good cotton; I have sample at my office which you are able to see."

"What do you think, Mr. Gorgonio?" asked George.

"I think, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, "it is good business offer and chance. You know that Mr. Tanderjee is all right in the other business you have done with him. Let him draw on you for three - fourths of whole price in usual way; let him wire payment, and the cotton will come away at once and be here in thirty days or thirty-five, when I can put it on the market for you to push down the current price a little just in time for buying many more December-Januaries. I would that do, Mr. Suffiel'."

Then there was evidently a breathless moment for the three Asiatics — the two puppets and the other, who for the nonce forgot his part of manipulator — until George had made reply; for the question concerned the very elbow - joint of their plot.

"Very well," said George, looking at Tanderjee; "they can draw on me for three-fourths of the amount if I like your sample. Let that be so," said he, pushing back his chair preparatory to departing into the billiard - room. "We shall see how that works, and then we shall go on accordingly." And George thought he was practising great caution and shrewdness.

While the three (with their coats off and with Daniel for marker) are exclusively occupied with their billiard-balls and cues, let me endeavor to make the situation clearer to ladies and to such as have small knowledge of speculation, and even to such as, having considerable knowledge of the most frequented ways of speculation, know little of this great provincial thoroughfare; for the

way of the cotton speculator is a way by itself. The cotton speculator does not actually speculate in cotton, but in *promises* of cotton; he buys or sells ("bulls" or "bears") "futures"—that is to say, he merely buys or sells *promises* to deliver cotton at some future time, and from beginning to end of the transaction he may not handle a fluff of cotton. When, a dozen years ago, a successful speculator made in a month a vast "corner" and a great fortune, he was said to hold 400,000 bales; and most of those who read that in the newspapers probably imagined huge warehouses stuffed with cotton. The corner-maker, however, had only a small office, and had never touched a bale. He merely had upon his books 400,000 bales of promises to deliver within a given time, and he made a fortune because most of those who had sold him promises had to pay heavily for their inability to fulfil their promises; for the traffic in promises has so much substance that the trafficker must be prepared to give or accept actual redemption of the promise if called upon. The man who plans a "corner," like the successful gambler at Monte Carlo, must be cool and sagacious and secretive. He must nicely calculate probabilities; he must know better, or make a shrewder guess, than others how much cotton may be in the market at a certain time, and he must not be suspected of ability or intention to make a corner. He buys his promises, of course, when the prices that rule in the market are low—buys for some particular month—and he shows his skill and secrecy in buying promises on all hands, while his right-hand neighbor does not know he has bought from his left; buying so many promises and for so much that the majority must fail to be fulfilled at the given time. He need not be a very wealthy man to practise this: for he may "buy" 1000 promises and not pay a penny down; but he must not, on the other hand, be poor, for he may at stated periods be called upon to pay (if prices fall, for even the corner-maker's wide-spread purchases do not invariably force prices up) the difference between the price he bought at and the price then ruling—and that difference, reckoned upon 1000 promises might amount to a good many thousands of pounds; and, moreover, he must be prepared, like Napoleon, for defeat. If his corner fail—if prices go down instead of up—then at the final settlement he will be called on to pay "differences" on all the promises he has gathered in, which will make a sum too great for the average speculator to pay; whereupon he goes bankrupt, or becomes a defaulter, and has to flee the country. In

this exposition is anticipated the answer to those shrewd readers who might demand why Gorgonio did not try to make a corner for himself, instead of for George Suffield. Gorgonio was very poor, and George was very rich (in his father's wealth); and in their compact George had engaged to pay periodical differences that might arise on their side, and the final losses if the corner should fail. Thus it should now be clear, to all how beset with terrible risks was the game to which George Suffield was settling down in his desire to be rich with haste.

When they had spent some considerable time in the billiard-room, Tanderjee departed to catch his last train for home, and in a little while George and his remaining guest went to bed. Then, again a little while, and the house appeared all quiet and dark. To make sure that all was quiet when all was dark, a dark figure, darker and more substantial than the darkness, with no gleam of white anywhere about it, neither on face nor hands, passed softly along the upper corridor and listened at this door and at that. As the figure turned away from the second door a board creaked dully beneath its tread and beneath the carpet, as if the ghost of Hamlet's father were in "the cellarage" and fumbling to get out. But the figure went on softly, on and down the wide stairs to the hall and to the hall door. By the time the bolts and chains of the door had been carefully undone another dark figure, but with touches of light and color about face and hands, appeared softly at the top of the stairs and leaned over. As soon as the door was unfastened and the first figure had passed softly out, softly latching the door, the second figure sped swiftly and softly down the stairs, found the latch of the door, and slipped carefully out after the first. The first figure was Daniel Trichinopoly. He had private business on hand that night, and privately he was setting about it. He had not yet discovered where the plans of the new machinery were kept, and every day that passed made the necessity for their speedy discovery more and more insistent. In the second figure it would not have been difficult to recognize the ugly Gorgonio. And the first sped on through the thick November night, and the second had great trouble to follow near enough and yet far enough off, over the sodden grass of the Park, across the fence into the clough, over the brook by the little rustic bridge—that was rather difficult for Gorgonio, without incurring the risk of being seen, but he achieved it on his stomach—and along the farther bank of the stream to a hole!—merely a hole in the side of

the clough, like a rabbit's burrow enlarged, almost hidden by a bush, and almost blocked by a large stone. To Gorgonio's amazement, Daniel quickly stripped himself to his undergarments, laid himself down, and crept into the hole. Gorgonio sat down on the stone by the hole to wait for Daniel's return, and to meditate on the possible purpose of Daniel's burrowing.

"He do not visit his native home that way," he murmured to himself; "no, no; the way is too long and too war-rm. Ho, ho!" and he chuckled at the grimness of his joke. "But where goes he, the dear Daniel? It is necessary he go somewhere, and for something. Life? No, not Daniel. Money? Eh? Something; something in a house—there is no money in this English ground. Ah, and we know in our East—do we not, Daniel?—that way of digging hole to enter house! Now where is a house?"

He ran from the stone and explored a few paces in the direction in which the hole seemed to run, and peered through the darkness a few paces farther still. He thought he saw a wall. He pushed a little nearer, and made out a small building of two stories, whose outward wall was apparently part of the circumambient wall of the Suffield works.

"Ah, yes," said he to himself, "here is something, and certainly here must be something inside. Windows strong and barred like prison, and *chevaux-de-frise* on walls. Certainly there is something inside."

But lest Daniel should have slipped out of the hole, Gorgonio returned. Daniel's clothes were still there, so he sat upon the stone at the entrance, with his eye upon the building which he had discovered. When he had sat some time and was becoming cold, he was certain that he saw a light flash in a window of the building. He jumped up.

"Ah, the dear Daniel! He must be there. Now I will have laugh to myself! Now I will scare him! now I will frighten him! Oh, ho, ho! How he will be frighten, the dear Daniel!"

He ran along to the building, threw pebbles and dirt at the windows, and shouted in a gruff voice, "Ho, ho! I saw you! Come out, sir! come out!" and then ran back to the hole and laid himself on the stone, with his face ready to put against the opening. When he heard a rumbling and heavy breathing he prepared, and when Daniel's head appeared from the hole he faced it and said:

"How do you do?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

"CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL"

AFTER Isabel was established in her flat, and had entertained company, she was drawn more and more into the round of social fashion. It was not "the season," as commonly understood, but Parliament was sitting, and the polite world was fairly full. Isabel came to be regarded as a "success." Certain leaders of fashion were pleased to set the seal of their approval on her, and Lady Padiham declared her "perfectly charming," and looked wistfully sometimes from her to her son, who, for his part, appeared quite content with the society and the conversation of his little Phemy. Isabel's fortune was not so much of a fortune as mere fortunes go—there are giddy young actresses who earn as much by twirling on their toes, and operatic songstresses who earn far more by their voices—but, added to Isabel's beauty and to Isabel's manners and attainments, it was a great deal.

Many gay young sparks fluttered round her at social gatherings, but they were speedily extinguished in her superior fire. The men who came round her and stayed were serious politicians, and eminent men of science and of letters; and it was whispered that a certain distinguished novelist was going to put her in a book; but the only reason for the whisper seemed to be that he talked very intimately with her for a long while one evening, and was observed to watch her closely when she was conversing with others.

Ainsworth was present at some of these gatherings (he received cards of invitation, he scarcely knew why), but the court he saw paid to Isabel was not eminently encouraging to his ambition. He thought modestly of his own merits, and every time he saw her with her court of admirers, when it was difficult to have a word with her, he resolved he would not accept another invitation; yet the next invitation he received he accepted, in the hope of seeing her and speaking with her.

Sometimes he heard things said about her which, for no reason

in particular, he resented. On one occasion he stood near three ladies who talked of her.

"How do you like Miss Raynor?" said one.

"She is very much admired," said another, not venturing an opinion of her own.

"She is very much run after," said the third, more boldly, "especially by men."

"Yes," said the first; "she is decidedly much more of a man's woman, than of a woman's."

Ainsworth could not quite say to himself, and he would have found it impossible to say to another, what harm there was in being "a man's woman"; but he did not like it.

Isabel, on her own part, was not free from troublesome feelings about Ainsworth. Early in these social dissipations she had experienced a singular shock. It was at a dinner at her uncle's where she had got into the habit of thinking her Aunt Phemy and herself supreme. It was somewhat of a surprise to her to find Miss Bruno, the novelist, of the company, though (remembering her aunt's words at her own house-warming) it was no surprise to see Ainsworth sit down at dinner beside her; but as dinner progressed and Ainsworth and Miss Bruno appeared to become more and more interested in each other, appeared even to begin to exchange confidences, it became a positive pain to her to know that they were together. It was the first time she had seen Ainsworth in agreeable and confidential talk with another young woman than herself. Miss Bruno was not unattractive; she was a large, pale woman with an abundance of fluffy straw-colored hair. Isabel found herself asking the question, "Does he admire *her*?" when the meaning of her feeling and the pain of it rose upon her in a blinding blush. Now she knew what her feeling for Ainsworth must be; that it was no longer mere friendliness (though when it had ceased to be that she could not guess), and that she desired to have him for her own, and could not endure to think he might be another's, or might wish to be another's.

The vividness of that feeling passed, of course, but the recognition of it remained. She frankly considered the whole matter, reviewed her intercourse with Ainsworth from the beginning, and came to the conclusion that Ainsworth loved her. That filled her heart with joy, till she considered also and completely understood his frequent girdings at her wealth. Might he not, in his absurd belief in the difference this wealth made between them—might he

not turn from her in hopelessness of winning her? She resolved that she would show him, more clearly than she had ever yet said, that this difference of wealth was less than nothing, and vanity. With more care and intention than before she invited him to her house when she was going to entertain other guests, and sometimes she asked him alone; for he had fallen into the habit of calling seldom except when invited.

Suddenly such tête-a-tête hospitalities were threatened with interruption in singular fashion.

Isabel's father had so much improved in his habits—though unhappily but little in his health—that he now regularly occupied himself with writing. His daughter had assured him there was no longer necessity for doing hack-work or journalism, since she had enough money to provide for him and herself both, and therefore he had turned to fulfil the dream of his life: he had begun to write the great philosophic work that was to make him famous—*A Defence of Transcendentalism*—a work the absolute need for which was evident in an age of mere utilitarian realism. Daily, therefore, he and Alexander (who remained faithful to his chief) journeyed to the British Museum, to rummage, make notes of authorities, and write *marginalia* in the reading-room. His daughter saw him daily depart on their expeditions without anxiety, for not since the summer had he disappeared for an opium debauch, and she had, therefore, postponed an expensive experiment for his complete restoration, which had been in her mind since ever her wealth had come to her. He still appeared sometimes loose-nerved and shaken, but she thought that condition was but the result of his persistent habit in the past, aggravated by his present regular application to work. Seeing him thus, Isabel was arranging to take him away for a week's rest and change in the soft air of a southern watering-place, when one morning the unexpected happened.

Alexander had come, as usual, to accompany his chief to the British Museum. He sat with his hat on his knees, answering Isabel's talk in unusually laconic and morose tones, waiting for the chief to appear. At length he came in, in a guise that amazed his daughter. His tall thin form was clothed in a long old ulster, from each pocket of which stuck the heel of a slipper. On his head was a travelling-cap, the lappets of which dangled loosely over his ears. Under his arms he carried a book or two tied together with string, and a bundle of manuscript, including his voluminous notes for his *Defence of Transcendentalism*, also tied about

and about with string; and on his arm hung an extra coat. When she saw him Isabel burst into uncontrollable laughter, though there was a feeling of anxiety and vexation at her heart. Her father winced and frowned a little on being thus greeted.

"Father, dear," said she, going to him and laying her hand on his arm, "what on earth do you mean by this?"

"Am I," said he, "so very ridiculous?"

"No, no, my dear," said she. "Forgive me, but I could not help laughing at your unexpected appearance with all these *impedimenta*. What is the meaning of it?"

"I am going away, my child. Comparatively naked came I to you six months ago, and comparatively naked do I depart. I am going away with nothing, my dear, that your bounty has conferred on me—nothing, I mean, that is detachable from myself."

"Going away?" said she. "But for how long?"

"Going away altogether, my dear, to work out my own salvation."

"Work out your own salvation? What nonsense are you talking, father?"

"To be explicit, my child, I and Alexander have come to the conclusion that this gay, giddy life is not for us to lead. We must work and redeem the time. Besides, I am an anxiety and a burden to you."

"You and Alexander, I suppose," exclaimed she, angrily, "wish to return to your old disreputable way of living!"

"That, my child," said her father, with a gentle sadness, "is an unkind thrust!"

"It is unworthy of you, Miss Raynor," put in Alexander, "to say that! But tell Miss Raynor the truth, sir."

"I beg, Alexander," said Mr. Raynor, "that you will not interfere."

Isabel was impatient and angry, but her anger was chastened and controlled by her abounding sense of the humor of the situation; while she seemed exceedingly serious and anxious, she was laughing in her heart.

"I ought to lead, my dear," said her father, "and I wish to lead peaceful, laborious days, uncharged with excitements; much eating and drinking and contact with people of rank and fashion do not agree with me. The world is too much with us here. I have a dream of peace through work, of rest through toil, and I wish to fulfil it."

"But, father dear," said Isabel, "can you not fulfil it here? You can be as quiet as you like. I thought you enjoyed seeing people and talking with them; and people certainly enjoy talking with you; again and again have I been complimented on having so clever a father. But if you don't like seeing many people, my dear, then we shall see only few people, Mr. Ainsworth and one or two more; and your days can be as peaceful and laborious as you will, though I think you have been making them a little too laborious lately."

"Let me advise you, sir," said Alexander, in his most portentously solemn tone, still nursing his hat on his knee, "to tell Miss Raynor the whole truth."

"Let me suggest, Alexander," said his chief, "that you should take a short walk and return in a quarter of an hour. By that time, I dare say, my interview with my daughter will be at an end."

"Very well," said Alexander, rising. "I will return in a quarter of an hour."

"My dear," said Mr. Raynor, as soon as Alexander was gone, "I am a miserable sinner. I have never told you anything but truth, my child; I think I am incapable of *speaking* anything but the truth; but, my dear, I have been acting a lie!" He set his *impedimenta* on the table and sat down, dropping his chin in dejection on his breast. "You have believed—I have induced you by my conduct to believe—that I have given up the use of that detestable drug; I have not, my dear. I have not used it openly in the form of opium since the summer, but secretly I have taken it since ever you took me to the Isle of Man in the form of laudanum. I began it there—I could not live without the detested stuff—and I have not since intermitted more than a day or two without a dose of it."

"Oh, my poor father!" said she, kneeling by him and taking his hand. "What a bond-slave to a deadly habit you have made yourself!"

"Bond-slave indeed, my dear!" he assented. "Bound with bonds more intangible than gossamer, but more enduring than thongs or chains!" And he showed, even in that moment, an evident relish of his phrases.

"And what were you intending to do, my poor dear?" said his daughter, with tears in her eyes. "Where were you intending to go?"

"Alexander was going to find a lodging," said he, turning on her helplessly his large, appealing eyes, "and I was going away to work till my book was done, and then to lie down and die! My continued existence is a burden and a shame to the earth! And yet I once had great schemes!" he added, with a wondering pathos.

"But, dear father," said Isabel, caressing his hand, "how could you work in a poverty-stricken lodging, after having had comfort and plenty, alone after you had been used to cheerful society, and with that habit growing tighter about you? You do not understand yourself, my dear. You have confessed to me, and now we will take counsel together what must be done. Why did you not tell me before, dear? Have I been unkind to you? Have I been neglecting you? No, no! I hope I have not."

"No, no, my child!" said he, while tears sprang in his eyes and flowed weakly down his cheeks. "No! If anything could save me, your love would, my child! It embraces and compasses me all about!"

"Well, dear," said she soothingly, "we must now think of something to be done to deliver you from this."

"O wretched man that I am!" he murmured, shaking his head. "'Who will deliver me?' This new form of the habit is worse than the other! It is always with me! I sometimes sit in horror—deadly horror!—of the degradation and the blighted utility of my life!"

"But to think such things," said his daughter, "is only morbid! Hopelessness of that kind is paralyzing! And in any case you must not think of leaving me alone! I am determined, my dear, to see you get free and strong! And to gain that end I will spend all I have if it is necessary! Don't you think, father, it would be wise to take the advice of a clever doctor?"

"Oh, not a doctor, my child!" exclaimed her father, in something like terror.

"Well, shall we talk the matter over with Mr. Ainsworth? You would not like to take Uncle George into counsel. He is good and kind; but he does not understand your case."

"Yes," said he, with something like cheerfulness, "let us talk it over with Ainsworth."

So when Alexander returned, he was despatched with a note to Ainsworth, at the office of his newspaper, requesting him to call as soon as he could. He sent back word that he would not be free till two o'clock, but that he would set out then.

Ainsworth came to his time, and the case was set forth to him. What did he think should be done? What would he advise?

"Most people," said he, "have opinions ready about the treatment of everything, from a pimple to an earthquake. I, too, have opinions, but I think that in this case they are worth nothing. I would suggest that the proper thing to do first is to see a competent doctor."

"In fact," said Isabel, "you are like the man in Charles Lamb's story—you advise that we should take some advice."

Isabel spoke lightly on purpose to reassure her father, and make him feel more at ease.

"Quite so," said Ainsworth. "Dr. Sandringham is said to be a very good man. He is to be seen, I believe, up to four o'clock. There is no time for action like the present; suppose we go at once?"

Mr. Raynor, having Isabel's opinion corroborated by Ainsworth's, agreed to see a doctor; and a cab was called, and he was being driven (in the company of his daughter and Ainsworth) to Dr. Sandringham's before he had time to turn round. Isabel and her father entered the doctor's consulting-room together, while Ainsworth remained in the waiting-room. Then Isabel came out and waited also, while the doctor interviewed Mr. Raynor for half an hour alone. At the end of that time he emerged radiant with hope, such virtue is there in the word of one with authority.

"He says I'll get over it!" he exclaimed, straightening himself. "And he wants to speak to you, my dear."

Isabel entered the presence of the doctor again, filled with curiosity and hope.

"Your father's is a most interesting case, Miss Raynor," said he. "I am all the more hopeful of it because he is a man of quick imagination. I think we can cure him of his habit; but the cure, I tell you frankly, will be rather expensive—a matter of six or seven hundred pounds a year. Is that beyond you?"

"Oh no," said Isabel. "I will gladly pay whatever is necessary. What must be done?"

"There is a doctor who takes two or three patients in his house on the Surrey hills; I recommend him to go there."

"Go away from under my care?" exclaimed Isabel.

"It is much better that he should be from under your care, my dear young lady. He will be taken complete and thoughtful care of by a scientific man who will understand him. You need be

under no apprehension, I assure you, that he will not be taken care of."

"Does he approve of going away himself?"

"Quite," answered the doctor, promptly.

"Then," answered Isabel, "I have no more to say. When should he go?"

"As soon as it can be arranged. I will telegraph to Dr. Skelton to be here to-morrow. I will tell him all I think of it, and then he will come on to you. I am glad to hear that your father is engaged on a philosophic work; he will be best employed. And, permit me to suggest, keep from him all particulars of outlay of money. I can see it would prey on him very much if he thought he were a great expense."

So the three drove back to Isabel's abode, discussing cheerfully her father's going. He was enamoured of the prospect.

"Though," said he, "I shall miss the Museum. What shall I do for books for my work?"

"We will get you a subscription at the London Library," said Ainsworth, "and I—or Miss Raynor—will bring you a bundle of books once a week, or when you will."

"That will do very well," said Isabel.

"But what," said Mr. Raynor, "is to become of Alexander? My poor Alexander!—he is a faithful creature! He has been with me for years!—a true friend!"

"I will look after him, father," said Isabel, "as much as he will let me."

"And what services of his Miss Raynor does not need," said Ainsworth, "I will secure. He shall be my Patrocles, my *fidus Achates*, as he has been yours, Mr. Raynor."

Thus they talked on the way; and Ainsworth, though he felt he ought to have been at work earning gold to bring his "queen of gold" nearer to him, abandoned himself to the delight of his brief, bright interval, which reminded him of the Marylebone days when they had all been gay and easy friends together.

And thus it came about that Mr. Raynor went away to be cured, and that *tete-a-tete* meetings between Isabel and Ainsworth cease for a time.

CHAPTER XXIX

"THE PLAY'S THE THING!"

ISABEL speedily provided herself with a constant chaperon, by having one of her aged to stay with her week by week. But the aged did not give her so much countenance as her father's presence had given her to invite Ainsworth to tête-à-tête visits. Yet, as it happened, that mattered little; for Ainsworth was sitting very close to his desk to manufacture his play—the hope of his heart—and was little inclined to tear himself from it even to see and to speak to her who was the remote hope of his heart.

Ainsworth had been for months hard at work on the play. Soon after the departure of "the chief," Alexander joined him as an active coadjutor, while he lodged in the same house, in the second-floor back. He did not help to construct the play or to write it, but he listened with flattering attention to the reading of scenes, and went forth into the byways of journalism and talked about them; and his acquaintance was, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, "extensive and peculiar." There was not a newspaper office, big or little, between Charing Cross and Ludgate Hill, but he was on some kind of speaking terms with; he knew the men (he had had drinks with them) who wrote the paragraphs everywhere about everything; and he exchanged salutations with the frequenters of all the bars of the Strand and Fleet Street. So it came about that such greetings and expositions as these often passed when he showed himself in one of his favorite haunts:

"Well, Alexander, how goes the play?"

"The play? What play?" said Alexander, affecting absence of mind. a

"Your friend Ainsworth's play?—the *stray duffer*?—the masterpiece?"

"The play of Mr. Ainsworth," said Alexander, portentously, "is not to be lightly spoken of. It goes exceedingly well; and it will take the wind out of the sails of one or two writers who believe themselves dramatists. The Great Panjandrum is, I believe, smell-

ing after it; but he buys a play only to put it in a chest to grow mouldy and out of date. Mr. Ainsworth and I understand business better than to have dealings with the Panjandrum.

"Is the play nearly ready?" asked one.

"The play has been nearly finished for a long time; but Mr. Ainsworth is always going over his dialogue again; and there are very pretty things in it. I remember one exceedingly pretty thing he read to me last night. A mock-heroic lover is addressing his sweetheart, and he says, 'Truth resides in you, as the bee in the flower.' But I believe he will touch it up unto seventy times seven if I do not take it from him and carry it out into the market."

And presently hints, guesses, intimations, paragraphs began to appear to whet public curiosity regarding the play of "Mr. Alan Ainsworth, the well-known journalist and dramatic critic."

It was not unlikely that Alexander himself was responsible for one or two of these paragraphs, for Ainsworth had turned him on to assist him in "doing" the theatres, and had found that with a little editing his stuff passed as tolerable, workaday journalism; and at the same time he had found him occupation as a purveyor of gossip on one or two journals—notably on that Lancashire journal whose staff he had once himself adorned. Certain (not all) of the paragraphs caught Ainsworth's eye, and he was very wroth.

"This must be from your gossip, Alexander," he said. "And I wanted the whole thing kept secret."

"But, Ainsworth," said Alexander, "the way to get your play forward is, first, to get it talked about. I flatter myself I have worked that very well. I am proud of the result."

"I am not!" said Ainsworth. "It may seem ungrateful in me, Alexander; but I am not. And I beg of you that you will henceforward say nothing at all about it; or if you must say something since you have begun, say something that will put people off the scent. Understand, please, my dear fellow, that I want the time and the place of its production—if it ever is produced—and its author's name kept secret. Don't be offended with me; but I have my good reasons."

"My dear Ainsworth," said Alexander, "I know them. You have not, if I may say so, hid your flame under a bushel!" And he shook with laughter at his joke.

"What do you mean?" said Ainsworth, scarce knowing whether to be angry or ashamed.

"My dear Ainsworth," said Alexander, "you know what I mean very well. I do not wonder at it. I only wonder that after seeing her and knowing her any man could take the smallest degree of interest in another woman. . . . What says Tennyson? 'A daughter of the gods! Divinely tall, and most divinely fair!' Even the miserable individual before you is subject to her fascination. But do not be alarmed, my dear Ainsworth. I have no pretention to have engaged anything but her most friendly regard. I pay my homage from afar off, and beat upon my breast. I am not worthy of her; indeed, I am by no means certain that you are—or that any man is."

"I thank you for that last clause, Alexander," said Ainsworth; "it soothes my vanity."

"And let me take the liberty of telling you, Ainsworth," said Alexander, brimming over with his subject, "that you have an immense amount of absurd vanity."

"Now, really and truly, Alexander," said Ainsworth, in surprise, "do you think me a vain person?"

"A very vain person," answered Alexander. "What does your toiling at this play mean? Vanity!"

"You mean it is vain to expect anything from it? I dare say you are right, though I did not think you would be the first to tell me the brutal truth about it."

"I mean nothing of the kind, Ainsworth," said Alexander, becoming very serious; "and you ought to know I do not. You are a very clever fellow, my dear Ainsworth, but in some things you are dull. I am surprised that you should do your female characters in your play so well, for actually and truly you are a dull dog in understanding the one woman you ought to understand best of all."

"Come, now, what do you mean, Alexander? You are taking long to get to your point."

"I venture to think," said Alexander, with heavy emphasis, "that I know a good deal of woman; and I mean and I say that you do not understand Miss Raynor. You are vain enough to wish to get to her level of wealth by your play; and you do not understand that she is the kind of woman that thinks nothing of fortune!—you do not understand it, Ainsworth—that if she were fond of a man she would follow him to the end of the world, though he had not a penny to bless himself with, and she would pour out all she had upon him with generous profusion."

"I do not understand that?" exclaimed Ainsworth. "I understand that only too well! That is why I stick to my play and hold my tongue; because I would not take advantage of her generosity! I will not be thought by any one to be a fortune-hunter!"

"I maintain, Ainsworth," persisted Alexander, "that it is all vanity."

"If you must give it a name, Alexander," said Ainsworth, "'Pride' is a better word."

"Vanity," said Alexander, obstinately, "I prefer 'Vanity.'"

"What would you say?—what does the world say of a poor man that marries a rich wife and spends her money?"

"A fico for the world!" said Alexander.

"And a fico for your opinion, Alexander! I shall go through with the play!"

"Very well," said Alexander, "I knew you were an obstinate mule! Lancastrian and Scotch is a bad cross," said he, meditatively.

"Well now," said Ainsworth, "let us get on with the play. Will you listen to my last scene? I have pretty well rewritten it since last night."

"Of course I will listen," said Alexander, in a tone of some offence. "What am I here for but to listen? Am I not bound to help you all I can?"

So the scene was read, and commented on. Before they parted for the night Ainsworth impressed again upon Alexander the advisability, the necessity, of being secret about all things connected with the play. Alexander grudgingly agreed; but he contrived that his silence should be as useful to Ainsworth as his speech had been; his manner of holding his tongue was as eloquent as Lord Burleigh's way of nodding his head. When he was greeted in the old way—"Well, how goes the play?"—he begged to be excused from making an answer; he had found he had made a grievous mistake in speaking of it at all; and he had now been expressly forbidden to say a word about it, and he would religiously obey his instructions. On another day he was asked would he not just say whether it were true that Mr. Cathedral had acquired the right for America? No; he would not say who had acquired any rights; secrecy had been enjoined, and secrecy should be maintained. He might, at least, say whether or not—a mere nod or shake of the head would do—it was Mr. Ainsworth's play that the manager of the Academy Theatre had set down for production after the Christmas holidays. Alexander neither nodded his head nor shook it;

he solemnly put his nose into his refreshment, but he imported a self-satisfied twinkle into his eye.

Of course, paragraphs immediately appeared to the effect that Mr. Ainsworth's play would be seen soon after Christmas (when it would be produced at the Academy), and that the famous agent, Mr. Cathedral, had purchased the American acting rights; and equally, of course, neither the manager of the Academy nor the eminent Mr. Cathedral took the trouble to deny these reports.

There was one man of consequence who was moved by these paragraphs—whether the latter or the former set, I cannot say. The manager of the Variety Theatre (himself an actor) was in desperate plight. For some time he had touched nothing that had paid him; he had lost faith in the established playwrights and publicly sneered at them, and he had a great mind to try a bold (it seemed to his theatrical acquaintances a reckless) experiment: *to produce a new play by a new writer!* He had heard of this young man, Ainsworth, and he knew he was generally thought well of as a dramatic critic; he was aware (he had frequently proved it by example) that it was seldom a critic of the drama could write a play, but yet it was not conclusively proved that a critic could not; so one day he sat down in his room at the theatre and scribbled a note to Ainsworth.

“DEAR SIR,—I have seen it mentioned that you are writing a play. You are acquainted with the requirements of this theatre. If you think your play is at all likely to suit my requirements, send it to me (type-written) when it is finished and I will read it.”

“Hooray!” cried Ainsworth, when he read the note. “Of course he promises nothing, and I know the chief requirements of his theatre is that a play should contain a part for him. I think mine contains that, Alexander; and, after all, it is an immense deal to get a spontaneous offer, even to read it!”

“And yet,” said Alexander, triumphant, “you entertained the opinion that my gossip was nothing but pernicious!”

CHAPTER XXX

RUMORS OF EVIL

It happened that on a certain evening at this time—while the two aspirants to her hand were each striving their utmost, in their own way and without her knowledge, to win her worthily—it happened that Isabel was invited to a political dinner at her uncle's. The dinner was going to be, her aunt told her, a very important affair—something in which the fate of parties, or of ministries, was involved; for the Suffields were now very important people. They were going on from strength to strength in the way determined by Mrs. Suffield. Mrs. Suffield's native dignity and breeding, and Suffield's simplicity and goodness, recommended the household in quarters where they might otherwise have been looked shyly on; for even the merely worldly and the cynical are touched by gentle and transparent worth. Their social ambitions were fulfilled with little striving (they were aided a good deal by their connection with the Padiham family, and even with Isabel), and though Suffield himself set no store by their fulfilment, his wife set much. Suffield was a good, easy man that would have been content to let the world slide and look on with a friend or two; but his wife would have him in among the throngs and agitations of men. She was not satisfied with his parliamentary progress. He had attended regularly, but he had not spoken once; and she strongly suspected, from the odor of his coat, that he spent a great deal of his time at the House in the smoking-room. (The fact was, he and his racy Lancashire stories were great favorites there.) She saw no sign that he was working to become a leader of his party, and she urged him if he would not speak to try to bring himself forward in some other way.

"I'll sit on a committee if you like, Joan," said he, with good-humored resignation. "Will that suit you?"

"Suit me, George? Will it do yourself any good? You ought to go on an electioneering campaign with somebody. Your platform speeches are always successful."

"Too successful, they tell me, my dear. I make the audience laugh so much they'll listen to nobody else, and I don't speak up enough for the party."

"Well, dear, why don't you?"

"Because, my love, I'm not built that way. But, Joan, my dear, I tell you what I'll do: I'll give political dinners. Do you like that?—with you to settle the guests? If that don't suit you, Joan, I don't know what will; unless I can somehow prevail on the queen to dissolve Parliament, and send for me to form a ministry."

So it was agreed that he should give political dinners; and this was the first to which Isabel was invited. The party was large, so that the conversation between any pair was little likely to be attended to and taken up by the whole table: there was something of the privacy of a crowd about it. Lord Clitheroe had taken Isabel down to dinner, and presently (they had a frank and friendly regard for each other) he began to speak of a matter that arrested her attention.

"It is lucky," said he, "that I was asked to take you down, Miss Raynor, for I wanted very much to talk to you; and it will be so much easier to talk now than afterwards, when people are dodging about and in and out of the drawing-rooms. Don't, please, look startled or indignant with anything I may say: we don't want to attract notice or inquiry."

"It should be something very interesting and piquant that you have to say," observed Isabel, "judging from your introduction."

"It is more than interesting," said he, seriously; "it is of the greatest consequence. Do you ever, may I ask, hear from your Cousin George?"

"No," answered Isabel, with a blush, "I don't."

"Well," continued Clitheroe, "I have learned, quite in a private way, that he is concerned in very risky cotton speculations."

"I know nothing about such things, of course," said Isabel; "but do you think that is likely to be true?"

"I know it is true," answered he. "The fact is, between ourselves, I have seen evidence of it with my own eyes. You know—or you may not know—that I am partner in the Lancashire bank which takes charge of the Suffield money, and I have seen large checks and acceptances which leave no doubt that he is engaged in risky cotton speculation with one or two very doubtful foreigners. You will understand I am telling you this quite in confidence. Perhaps all the danger of it does not strike you; but he has no

business to be engaged in speculation at all, and that particular kind of speculation is likely to be most ruinous, especially to a man who cannot give all his attention to it. It is even possible—if he goes on—that he may in a short time ruin his proper business, and ruin his father along with it.”

Isabel looked at him shrewdly, and he blushed under her look.

“Do not, please, misunderstand me,” said he. “I am not anxious on my own account. I would marry Phemy whatever happened—though, I have no doubt, I would have trouble with my people. I am anxious on George’s account, whom I like—he is a very good fellow, though a little too strongly convinced of the accuracy of his own judgment—and on Mr. Suffield’s account, who is the best man in the world. I would speak to George myself about it, except that I am afraid of being misunderstood; and of course it would not be fair to speak to Mr. Suffield. That’s why I have spoken in confidence to you.”

“You think I should speak to him, or write to him, about it?”

“I know,” said Clitheroe, “he thinks more of your opinion than of that of any one else in the world.”

Isabel did not answer: her thoughts had taken a peculiar bent—a bent which became apparent in a conversation which she held a little later with a legal luminary. After dinner there was a “reception”—a “reception” which was more and less than a polite function, for it was a party gathering on the eve of the division on a great debate. That night was a Government night, when “Interim Supply” was taken, and therefore members felt free to desert the House. They fluttered in and out, and buzzed in corners of the Padiham-Suffield drawing-rooms, great men and little men, “grave old plodders” and “gay young friskers,” discussing the situation and the prospects of the division. The men came and went, but the ladies stayed on with tolerable steadiness to see the ever-popular party chief.

Isabel was by no means what would be called a “political woman;” but she took “an intelligent interest” (a much-abused phrase) in all human affairs, and politics being pre-eminently human and mundane, she took an interest in politics. That is the least that may be said for her. Her admirers (and they were legion, for had she not beauty and wit and wealth?) thought her a paragon of political understanding and acumen, and declared it was a pity she was not “in the House”; for then she would have been certain of the reversion of the party leadership, so sure and complete was her knowl-

edge of men and her tact in dealing with them. Such things as these, and many more, were said that night as Isabel moved to and fro, catching the eye of all (the admiring eyes of the men, and too frequently the envious eyes of the women), by her remarkable stature, carriage, and beauty.

"Let me introduce to you, my dear Miss Raynor," said the Countess of Padiham, who, though old, was an active political person, "Sir Henry Dobbs, the eminent Queen's Counsel, you know. He is longing to know you; he has heard so much about you."

So Isabel was introduced to the eminent Sir Henry Dobbs, a middle-aged gentleman of heavy aspect but of light mind. He made puns and quoted sentimental love-verses. He asked Isabel about her Home for Aged Governesses: he was much interested in it, he said, because he had an aunt who was an aged governess. Isabel explained to him all her method of managing her aged, and of cheering and brightening their lives. "Admirable! admirable!" exclaimed the eminent Q. C. He approved enthusiastically of every detail, and gayly offered to join her aged in a dance some evening.

"Your whole scheme, Miss Raynor," said he, "seems to me remarkably, unusually wise and humane and original. If you need any help, pray say so; I shall have the extremest pleasure in sending you a check."

"Thank you very much, Sir Henry," said she. "At present the venture is all my own; though," she added, "I may by-and-by have to ask my friends to help me. And if I ever make a will, Sir Henry, I shall ask you to be trustee for my aged."

"My dear Miss Raynor," said Sir Henry, "in all probability you will outlive me; but, still, I am prepared to do whatever you ask me. And a will?—of course you must make a will."

"Must I?" said she, craftily. "But suppose I wished to give my money away while I lived—what must I do then?"

"Write a check," he answered, laconically.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"Do you really wish to know?" he asked.

"Well," she laughed, "it would be useful to know. And it is so pleasant to think you are getting legal advice without paying for it."

"To make the transfer quite safe and legitimate," said the lawyer, "you must ask the consent of your trustees, if you have any, and execute a Deed of Gift."

She parted from Sir Henry ; and though she had said little to him—being, indeed, much preoccupied—Sir Henry spoke of her as the most charming and brilliant young lady he had ever met : she was bright and beautiful, and she had listened to him with attention and understanding. She went home very soon and entered her drawing-room.

“Don’t go to bed just yet,” she said to the maid who had admitted her, and who turned up the light ; “I should like you to run to the pillar-post with a letter in a few minutes. You won’t mind, will you ?”

She sat down at once to her writing-table to compose a letter to George. She found it a more difficult task than she had anticipated—to avoid appearing too warmly interested in him, and yet be cousinly, affectionate, and frank ; to express the fear that he was embarked in dangerous speculations, and yet not stir in him resentment and suspicion. She accomplished it, however, with tolerable satisfaction, and sent it to the post by her maid. But, still, she sat at her writing-table—sat with her chin in her hand, and the lace of her sleeve falling away, like foam of the sea, from her white, rounded arm. She was thinking closely, thinking of that matter which had occupied her ever since Lord Clitheroe had said that George’s present course might end in her uncle’s ruin. It had come on her at once like an inspiration—with the joy as well as the suddenness of an inspiration—that if that should happen there was one clear thing for her to do. She had had, ever since she had grown to woman’s estate and could understand her past situation, a passion of gratitude, deep beyond expression, towards her uncle and aunt, but especially towards her uncle, for the care, the expense, and the love they had lavished on her deserted childhood and youth. She had refused so soon as she was able, and maintained her refusal, to quarter herself longer upon their kindness and love. It had often chafed her in thought that she could not in the smallest degree repair their care and bounty. Now there was promise of an opportunity which she received with an expansive and abounding glee ; if her uncle and her aunt were brought to poverty, she could give them wealth ! She would transfer to them the fortune which Uncle Harry had left her, and she herself would turn to again and earn a living for herself and her father—(her aged need not suffer, for there were many friends ready to help her to maintain them as they were). What should she do ? Return to school-teaching ? She was not fond of teaching. Alan

Ainsworth had once told her she ought to be a novelist. Who knew? Perhaps she might become a novelist, or, at any rate, a writer of some sort. From that she fell to thinking of Ainsworth, and then of George; and so she went to bed.

Next day there came in a singular fashion a suggestive indication that Lord Clitheroe's suspicions of George's speculation were not astray, and that even George's father was somewhat troubled in his mind concerning his son.

A question had arisen respecting our administration of a certain part of India; and there was expected a debate in the House of Commons on Indian affairs, a great debate for which Suffield, with the help of his secretary, had prepared a great speech. All the Suffield contingent in London declared its intention of being present in the House in honor of the occasion, in spite of the protestations of the prospective orator. Mrs. Suffield, her daughter, and Isabel sat behind the grating; the Tame Philosopher (and Alexander also, as having a tender interest in all that even remotely concerned Miss Raynor) sat in the Speaker's Gallery; and Lord Clitheroe was prepared to listen from his place in the House. But the lively hopes of all were blighted. Mr. Suffield had resolved, and communicated to his friends his resolution, to speak after Mr. So-and-so, who was an ex-Cabinet minister and a great debater. At the end of the speech next but one before Mr. So-and-so was expected to rise, Mr. Suffield walked lightly and cheerfully forth, doubtless to enjoy a whiff of tobacco in the smoking-room. He came back just as Mr. So-and-so rose, but he was changed. He looked so anxious, worried, and absent-minded that the three ladies glanced at each other with inquiry in their eyes. At the expected time all were ready to hear Mr. Suffield's vocative of "Mr. Speaker." Mr. Suffield rose—with no great alacrity—at the same moment as Colonel Lukyn, an austere veteran tanned with the suns of India; seeing the colonel up, Mr. Suffield gave way at once, and the colonel caught the Speaker's eye and began his speech. Mr. Suffield glanced furtively and plaintively round the galleries, as much as to say, "What could I do?" The colonel's speech was stiff and prosy; the House grew impatient (it had had enough of the Indian debate) and began to utter irritating cries of "Vide! 'Vide!" which grew steadily more persistent. When the Indian colonel sat down the debate collapsed, and the division was taken.

When Mr. Suffield met his friends a little later he looked rather foolish.

"Well," said he, deprecatingly, "it didn't come off, did it?"

"It certainly did not, my dear," said his wife, with sharp energy. "And I begin to doubt whether it ever will."

"Oh, my dear," said he, "we'll try again some day."

"Why," said she, "did you give way to that red-faced colonel?"

"Well, Joan," said he, "to tell you the truth, I felt he knew all about India, and I felt I knew nothing about it."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Mrs. Suffield. "Haven't you known Harry, who has told you about India?—haven't you in your service a native of India?—and don't you do business with India? Surely you might have a better, a more unprejudiced view of India than a red-faced colonel who only spent his life there!"

"I am not so sure of that, Joan," said Suffield. "If a grocer had a brother that worked in a mill, and if he once or twice sold me a pound or two of sugar, would he be a fit and proper person to pronounce an opinion about my business, and say it should be managed this way or that way?"

"George," said his wife, with conviction, "you'll never do in politics."

"Oh," said Lord Clitheroe, "Mr. Suffield will do very well yet. A man sits and funks it for a long while, and thinks he will never catch the House of Commons way, and then he stands up to say half a dozen words once and finds he has got quite the run of it, and says half a dozen thousand words instead of half a dozen. Now there's me: I haven't spoken yet."

"Oh, you're a goose!" exclaimed Phemy. Lord Clitheroe smiled.

"It is fortunate, uncle," said Isabel, "that making House of Commons speeches is not a means of grace; for you would be in a poor way."

"I don't know why you badger father so," said Phemy. "I am sure it must be much more amusing to say 'Heaw! Heaw!' or 'Vide! 'Vide!' as Clitheroe does, than to get hot making speeches!"

"Amusing, child?" said her mother. "Men are not members of the House of Commons to amuse themselves!"

"Oh, aren't they?" said the artless Phemy, with a mischievous glance at her betrothed. "I thought they were!"

"To tell you the absolute truth, my lad," said Suffield to Lord Clitheroe as they walked out to their carriage, he leaning on Clitheroe's arm while Isabel walked immediately in front of them

and so overheard his words, "I went into the smoking-room for a whiff, and there was a man—one of the Liverpool members—saying that there are still strong suspicions down there that some person is trying on a 'corner' in cotton, a foreign creature called Gorgonio—do you know him?"

"I? No!" said Clitheroe.

"I thought you gave a start when I named him. George knows him, though—we met him in the summer in Douglas—and I wondered, if there is a 'corner' likely to be on, and he knows of it, why he hasn't told me. And if he doesn't know, he ought to know, to lay in enough cotton in time; for about th' end of th' last 'corner' prices went up so that I couldn't afford to buy, and had to put the mills on half-time."

"Why don't you write to George about it, Mr. Suffield?" asked Clitheroe.

"Well, I did write to him a month or so ago, when that article of McFie's appeared. And his answer was pretty much 'Stuff and nonsense!' I don't like to write again in a worrying way; because, you see, he's young, and if you want a young horse to go well you mustn't *tew* at the reins. But that bothered me, and I couldn't think of my speech. It was like a bit of grit got into the delicate machinery of my brain, and it wouldn't let my speech unwind. I think I'll go down and see George: that'll be best."

To Isabel that seemed evidence of far stronger quality than it really was that the ruin of her uncle was imminent. Her imagination held steadily before her the anxious, troubled face of her uncle when he re-entered the House after his brief absence, and touched it with anguish and pity.

"Poor uncle!" she said to herself. "To lose all that he and aunt worked so hard and for so many years to get together! Dear, dear uncle! Oh, how glad I am!—how I thank God that I am able to do something for you!" She wrought herself into such an impression that the voluntary surrender of her wealth was near and actual, so that when she reached home she sat down by her drawing-room fire and considered the details: her father must be removed from his present retreat (her heart sank a little), and she must give up her pleasant home. In short, as the details rose before her, the surrender, though sweet and ungrudged, was painful. Was that strange? She was a good, generous girl, but she was quite human; and she had enjoyed the advantages of wealth for so short a time that its

novelty and attractiveness had not worn off. It is easy to commend the simple joys of hard work and contented poverty; and the wealthy man or woman who has worn himself or herself out with the cares of this world, and wearied his or her appetite with their indulgence, may think with longing of rest from care in a little cosy parlor with a supper of bread and cheese. It is even easy to endure poverty with cheerfulness when you have never known aught else. But when you have known hard, thankless work and eaten of poverty till its grit has set your teeth on edge, and then have passed away from both, why then it is a very painful prospect to surrender leisure and wealth when you have but tasted how sweet they are, how "good for food," how "pleasant to the eyes," and how much "to be desired to make one wise." Moreover, Isabel was cleverer than most of those who suddenly come into the possession of wealth, and she had wide views of the satisfaction its use can bring. We have seen that from the first she did not think only of self-comfort and self-indulgence: she planned and spent with generosity and charity for others. But during the few months she had held her wealth she had learned the far-reaching power that wealth invests its possessor with—power for good and power for evil. An equally shrewd but less courageous woman, perceiving that, would probably have shrunk from the responsibility of doing anything for fear of doing evil, or have timidly let her wealth and influence flow into channels that are traditionally and conventionally good; but Isabel ventured to have notions of her own of what it would be good to do— notions which were as yet but inchoate and shapeless, but which must be now entirely abandoned.

She looked round the room in which she sat. She liked it: it was comfortable, luxurious, and rich; it pleased her eye and her artistic taste, and it satisfied her fancy. She had got it all together herself; there was not a thing around her that she had not taken pains to choose, to discover, and to acquire. Everything—even the cushion against which her back rested—had a little history of its own. Must she give all those little things up which had become like outlying fringes, tassels, and ornaments of her life? And these curious ornaments of rare Indian and Chinese workmanship in gold and gems which belonged to Uncle Harry, and which now adorned her neck and arms—must they be surrendered?

Was it strange that the expectation of losing all these things

should cause her a pang? Was it not, indeed, right that it should, and yet that she should not hesitate, even in thought, in her intention of surrendering them? She said to herself steadily, "They must go!" not once did she murmur, "Can I not keep them?" The passion of sacrifice was upon her, and its pain only made it the more worthy and pleasing. At the same time its pleasure was enhanced by the thought that if she were once stripped of her wealth Alan Ainsworth would cease to hold aloof from her as he had persistently done of late—he had even excused himself from attending her uncle's House of Commons function, though she had herself asked him—and might come to her with the magic glow of love on his cheek, take her hand and say, "*I need you now!*"

She went and sat down at her writing-table, and, moved by this ferment of thought and feeling, took from a drawer that journal of her uncle's which was his last bequest, and in which she frequently read. She opened the book at random now, and prepared to read. But she paused, with her finger in the place, and thought how strange are the turns of circumstance, how unaccountable that element of surprise in life which men call "the irony of fate!" Why, for instance, should it have so fallen out, first, that Uncle Harry's wealth should have come to her, and then that she should have to give it up after a few months' possession?

Thinking thus, she happened to fling the board of the book back to open it again. The board, thus flung aside, showed something she had never noticed before—that upon its inner side was a flap or pocket. She thrust in thumb and finger, and to her surprise drew out a sheet of note-paper—a few sentences of a letter which Uncle Harry had begun and addressed to herself. She read all the sentences again and again, but these stuck to her memory: "It would please me much, if you can see your way, that you should marry George, as he and his father desire. He is a worthy young man, but obstinate and over-confident, and there is no woman can help him and guide him better than you."

Coming at that juncture, the words struck Isabel strangely and solemnly—almost like a message from the tomb.

CHAPTER XXXI

TANDERJEE RECEIVES A CHECK, AND DANIEL FINDS A KEY

GEORGE SUFFIELD was troubled by Isabel's letter and by a gentle note from his father, which he received about the same time (his father said he had heard disquieting rumors about cotton, but he would leave them to be talked over when he came down for Christmas, unless George thought there was anything of pressing importance to communicate), for they both had heard, "on good authority," matters, in fact, of which he had hoped that no one else suspected the existence. Yet it was characteristic of George that the fact of his proceedings being guessed at or suspected scarcely made him doubt the sufficiency of the means he had taken to keep them hid; it did little more than make him angry with the "good authorities" (whoever they were) who had been so prying as to guess or suspect. So he merely wrote to his father that he had nothing disquieting to communicate; and then he wrote to Isabel with reassurance and fervor; and in the heat of the reassurance and fervor he went on in the course to which he was committed, and from which he saw neither reason nor necessity for departing.

For the cotton business was rapidly coming to a head—coming to such a head and gathering of offence as the trusting George did not suspect. All things seemed going well. Prices had gone up and down, just as Gorgonio and George had hoped they would. And that cargo of Indian (for which George had given Tanderjee an advance) had arrived, and had proved a conspicuous success. It had been of good quality, and had helped to raise the reputation of Indian in the market; and since there was the rumor of more of as good quality from the same quarter, it had sent down prices sufficiently to enable Gorgonio to make many more large purchases with the view to cornering. And yet prices kept pretty much at a steady level in their careless way; for, though many believed that Gorgonio was trying to corner, no one believed that he could; that he had either money or experience enough (but especially not money enough) to carry him through.

George was thus in very hopeful mood when one day, early in December, Tanderjee came to him in the city office of the Suffields. He carried in his hand a roll of sample cotton, which, after a brief word of greeting, he opened out before George.

"It is good, is it not, Mr. Suffiel'?" he said. "It is clean, soft, long. It is excellent cotton—think you not, sir?"

"It is very good, certainly," said George, after examining it. "Indian, I suppose?"

"It is Indian, of course, Mr. Suffiel'."

"And you want me to do something with it, I suppose?"

"My people is very poor, and Mr. Suffiel' is very rich; it is what the wise say, the rich man have the advantage. My people will gladly sell you at reduced price, on the old terms, as before, again."

"How much is there?"

"There is sufficient, Mr. Suffiel', to fill two steamer."

"That is a great deal. I don't think I can do anything without consulting Mr. Gorgonio; I must ask him how it would affect our other business."

"That is all quite correct, Mr. Suffiel'. Send for Mr. Gorgonio at once; the telegraph will bring him."

So George sent a telegram to Gorgonio, inviting him to come over at once from Liverpool on business, and Tanderjee departed for an hour or two. Gorgonio came with speed and a look of expectation, though he already knew all about the business, and had been waiting in his Liverpool office for the arrival of the summons. George set the matter before him, and he appeared to consider the carpet very deeply and closely. Then he raised his head and spoke. He begged Mr. Suffiel' to observe that the business was like this: The cotton would in any case come to Liverpool; for their purpose they did not wish more cotton to come for some weeks; but cotton *would* come. What then? Was it not better that he should have the control of it from the beginning than be compelled to reckon with it, deal with it, and perhaps fight with it when it came?

"Buy it, then, Mr. Suffiel', said Gorgonio, "buy it, and let me receive it for you, and warehouse it, and sell it gradually, by parcels, at the top price."

Finally, George agreed to that suggestion, and when Tanderjee came in to receive his answer he said he would buy the cotton on the former terms, and that Tanderjee might tell the Bombay peo-

ple to draw on him at once for three-fourths of the amount. But Tanderjee urged a further request, with a low bow and his hand on his heart.

"My people, Mr. Suffiel', is very poor, and you are very rich; they have advise me that some money which they must pay me I will pay myself if I get the money from you. It will save the exchange from English into Indian, and from Indian into English again, and it will be very much more convenient for me in time. So, Mr. Suffiel', if you give me check now for them, I pay myself, and it is quite correct."

The statement seemed obscure, but George thought it was probably all right, and that its obscurity was only due to Tanderjee's constrained English; moreover, he had done business a good many times with Tanderjee, and had always found him straightforward and correct, and therefore, being on the whole a simple, honorable, and kindly Englishman, he wrote out a check for £7500, with which Tanderjee departed, leaving the air musical with his profuse thanks.

Next morning Daniel Trichinopoly, while his master was occupied at the works, found he had business to do on his master's account in the town; and when in town he called on Mr. Tanderjee. Mr. Tanderjee received him in his private office.

"You have come, my son," said Mr. Tanderjee, in Daniel's native tongue. "It is well, yea, twice well; for all is ready on my part. What of yours, my son? Do you, in deed and in truth, bring the plans in your bosom?"

"I have searched all places, and all drawers in the office, and in the house of my master, O worshipper of the Sun, but I have found nothing!"

"Ah, still nothing, my son! Still nothing, and nothing, and nothing!" said Mr. Tanderjee, pacing up and down and waving his arms, while his spectacles gleamed with distraction. "Is this, my son, the realm of Chola that we two dwell in, or is it the realm of deceit? You permitted the son of a dog, or a pig, the Gorgonio, discover our secret of the plans, so that he has demanded his share of the reward! He has said, 'The knife should be applied where there is flesh!' It is shameful to tell it, and painful to weep over it! And now—now—there are no plans! And all things else are ready!"

Tanderjee looked as if he could "tear a cat" in his despair.

"There is still time, O worshipper of the Sun," said Daniel,

sweetly. "It is impossible that we should go away until the Festival of Christmas is upon us. And there is still one place to search and examine; but it is difficult."

"Oh, let not difficulty make your heart faint, O cunning one! For is not the way to wealth difficult, and the door-step to riches slippery? What is the one place still to search, my son?"

"It is the great box of iron that is called 'Safe,' and that stands in the office like a shrine. No man, as I hear, has ever seen it open, and when my master opens it he locks the outer door. Methinks there dwells in it the demon or spirit that brings the Sahib Suffield and Sahib George their luck!"

"You are but a fool, my son Daniel. You have learned the religion of the English sahib as a deaf man listens to a song. You are still in the bonds of your native ignorance. The safe is but a strong box. See, I have one, and there is no demon in it."

He opened the door of a very small safe let into the wall over the fire-place, and let Daniel look in. But Daniel seemed scarcely reassured.

"That box, O worshipper of the Sun," said he, "is only a toy compared with the box I have seen. And, moreover, how know I that a little demon does not dwell in your box when it is shut up for the night?"

"The successful man knows no fear," said Tanderjee. "Be you successful and you will laugh at the demons. The safe of Sahib George opens with a key, my son: where does the Sahib George keep the key?"

"It is that key, I believe, O worshipper of the Sun, which the sahib keeps in the pocket of his trouser and fastened with a chain round his waist. Sahib George would defend that key with his life."

"You must get possession of that key, my son."

"I cannot do violence to my master," answered Daniel. "Moreover, if I offered violence to my master, which of us would prevail?"

"Your wits are becoming dull, O cunning one," said Tanderjee. Then, suddenly bethinking himself and frowning, he stepped up to Daniel and shook all his fingers in his face. "We dwell in deceit, my son! You hide your meaning under green leaves of stupidity! When the jackal becomes fat he can hunt no more: is it not so, my son? The English sahib feeds the dog well, and it longs to dwell with him—is it not so?"

"Is it good to cut a man's throat after gaining his confidence?" said Daniel, sulkily. "Is it well to betray a man who has fed you with his bounty? The Sahib George has given me his confidence, the sahib has fed me with his bounty; you may take the key of safe yourself, O worshipper of the Sun; *I will not!*"

Daniel was turning to the door, but Tanderjee intercepted him. He shook his fingers in Daniel's face; he threatened; he cursed (in Tamil); and, finally, he whined, for Daniel stood calmly listening to all his moods.

"Why will you make me frantic, O cunning one?" said Tanderjee. "You mean it but for a pleasantry—do you not?—that you may see I need you as much as the carpenter needs a saw. Think you the reward I have promised is not enough, O cunning one? Is it so?"

"If a man sells his honor for a cash," asked Daniel, "can he buy it back for a crore? I will sell my honor only for a crore, O worshipper of the Sun, so that I may have wherewithal to buy it back."

"You are a hard bargain-driver, O cunning one," said Tanderjee. "But I will increase your reward to half of the money which I have received when you put into my hands the plans."

"Copies of the plans, O worshipper of the Sun."

"Be it so. Copies of the plans."

Then it was arranged between them that Daniel should find means as speedily as possible to handle the key of the safe, and to take a wax impression of it, which he would give to Tanderjee, and that Tanderjee would thus get made a copy of the key, which he would give to Daniel. It was for some time a point of contention whether or not Daniel, when he had discovered the plans, should bring them to Tanderjee for aid in the copying; Tanderjee thought he must, but Daniel (clearly distrusting Tanderjee) thought he need not; he was clever enough to do the copying himself in the place where he should find them.

It was now necessary for Daniel to tell, first of all, what key was the key of the safe. That very evening, when George sat alone at dinner, Daniel made an attempt.

"With regard, Mister George," said he, with simple guile, "may I be permit to ask the question: what you keep at the end of the chain which chain you like a prisoner?"

"A key, Daniel," answered George, carelessly.

"Nothing but a mere simple profane key, Mister George?" ex-

claimed Daniel. "If I am not very troublesome to mention, the same time I must say it is singular and strange, etcetera, for a gentleman to wear a key tied with a chain to the middle of his body. With regard — I beg to excuse, Mister George — why that key do not it hang on its respected nail like other keys? But it would not be an astonishment to know that it is a pocket-key, a key of worship, a key of gold."

"It is in a sense a key of gold," laughed George, taking the bright little steel instrument from his pocket, "for it is the key of the safe."

"Ah," said Daniel. "The key of safe? And may I beg to know? 'Safe' is called that great box of iron in the sahib's office?"

"That's it," said George, tired of the subject.

It was not difficult for Daniel (in spite of his contrary protestations to Tanderjee) to find an opportunity to hold the key a few minutes in his hand in the frequently recurring aid he gave to George in dressing or undressing; and when a copy of the key was made it was not difficult for Daniel — not very difficult — to open the safe, and to search for the plans (in spite of the genius of the Suffields which resided there); and when the plans were at last found it was not beyond the powers of Daniel (had he not been carefully taught reading, writing, ciphering, and drawing by Christian missionaries?) to make excellent copies of them.

On the whole, then, there is no room for amazement that Christmas had not yet come, though it was at hand, when Daniel sent a note to Mr. Tanderjee containing these words only:

"All is ready. Prepare."

CHAPTER XXXII

ISABEL IS WAITED FOR

"No woman can help him and guide him better than you!"

Isabel repeated these words again and again, with a certain solemnity, the morning after she had first read them, and every time she repeated them she murmured, "There is no mention of love." She was going to surrender her wealth (that idea was still vividly present with her), out of love and gratitude to her uncle and his family; must she now also surrender herself? The passion of sacrifice was, as I have said, strong upon her; but yet she was not then fully prepared to make the second surrender that seemed to be due from her. She felt herself drifting into contemplation of its possibility, because, though strenuously confident the evening before, she was now very doubtful of holding on to the hopes Alan Ainsworth had created.

She went to the Home of her Aged, and partook of lunch with them; and then she drove to Victoria Station to take train for the Surrey hills to visit her father. The day was bright and warm, and she found him enjoying the December sun on a southward slope of the grounds of his abode, with a blotting-pad upon his knee, busy with pen and paper and a bagman's ink-pot. He was so engrossed with his *Defence of Transcendentalism* that he had little to say to his daughter. And presently she left him.

When she returned to town she found a letter awaiting her from George, in answer to her own. He wrote absolutely a lover's letter; he could not (he said) possibly be offended by anything she might say to him; it was the ambition of his life to have her always saying all kinds of things to him; he was running some risk, of course—all business was surrounded with risks; but he had no fear of results, and what he was doing was entirely for her; he was only striving to have a fit provision for her on the day when she would answer him and put her hand in his, he hoped. Would she not come down at Christmas? He was expecting her. That generous and confident epistle necessarily had its effect. It

toned down her anxiety about her uncle's future, and it rendered the prospect of obedience to what she regarded as Uncle Harry's dying request a trifle more possible and attractive. The attention and attitude of her mind were still further changed that evening. She dined at her uncle's again (this time it was a literary dinner), and her uncle was so jovial and seemed so void of care, and the affairs of the household seemed to be so much on their usual generous basis, that (taking also into account George's letter) she felt that she had been somewhat "previous" (as our American cousins pleasantly say) in her passion of concern about her uncle's affairs. "How absurd of me;" she thought, "to be so very fast! I believe there is nothing wrong at all!" And the more inclined she had been to think ruin at hand, the less inclined was she now to believe that there was any likelihood of ruin; it was the natural reaction of strong feeling and vivid fancy.

But the most moving thing for her was the presence of Alan Ainsworth. Her heart leaped on seeing him, regardless of all considerations of neglect, forgetfulness, or misapprehension; and then it went out to him when she noted how pale and thin he looked, as if worn with work and sleeplessness.

"You look ill," said she. "Have you been working very hard?"

"He's not burning the candle at both ends," said her uncle, with a laugh, "but he's fair melting it, like th' lad that put his farthing dip into th' oven to keep it warm. *He's* shutting himself up too much with his writing. This is th' first time I've seen him for months, I think."

"What is the reason?" asked Isabel, with anxiety. "Is it the play that has been wearing you out? How is it going? Why don't you read it to me? I am sure I could help you with suggestions. I think I might be at least as useful as Molière's housekeeper or Dumas's fireman. You might try it on me as one of the average public, and if I went to sleep or slipped away you would know that that particular passage would not do."

"You would be of no use, Miss Raynor," said he, very soberly—was he cold to her, she wondered, or was he only tired?—"as a representative of the average public, I am sorry—and at the same time glad—to say. You would be too critical; you wouldn't be content to let my effects touch you or move you; you would want to know how the effects were produced; and if they didn't touch you, you would want to examine why they didn't. Alto-

gether you would be too curious, Miss Raynor, and would wish to take the machinery to pieces."

"There's a character to give me!" exclaimed Isabel to her uncle. "Which, he says, he is both glad and sorry to give!"

She spoke lightly, but she was deeply hurt by his words and by his manner of saying them; if his eyes rested on her an instant they wandered away again, as if in search of another with whom he had rather talk. That was in the drawing-room before dinner, and later she was more deeply hurt still. At dinner she did not sit near Ainsworth, but afterwards they came together without his appearing to seek the encounter. They had an opportunity for confidential talk, of which he did not avail himself. Indeed, he spoke to her little more intimately than to a casual acquaintance.

"Are you very well?" he said.

"Oh yes," said she in some surprise; "I am very well."

"I hope your father is getting on well," he went on; "I haven't been able to go to see him for some time."

"Yes," she answered, "my father, I am thankful to say, is going on very well. He is entirely taken up," she added, with a smile, "with his *Defence of Transcendentalism*."

Her smile was unavoidably accompanied by a wistful look of wonder concerning the meaning of this farce of conversation between them. He caught her look, and turned pale even to the lips, while she flushed with a burning glow. There was an awkward pause.

"Are you going to Lancashire for Christmas?" he asked presently with the merest politeness.

"I don't know," she answered. "I mean, I have not yet decided."

Then her uncle came along, and Ainsworth left her and went and talked with Miss Bruno the novelist, who, Isabel could see, received him with marked pleasure. Isabel was not only deeply wounded, she was ashamed and angry. Her bosom heaved in a turmoil of amazement, disappointment, and jealousy, so that she had to move away and compose herself alone.

Why did Ainsworth behave thus? The fact was he was afraid to trust himself in Isabel's presence. He had to put a constraint upon himself, lest he should pour out what he longed to say, but for which the time was not yet come. Had he then uttered what was in his heart, what had once and again risen almost to his lips,

much pain and stress of feeling might have been spared both to Isabel and to himself. But he held his tongue and he went away, because he had pledged his word to himself that he would not ask Isabel to say yea or nay until after a certain event had taken place. The event was ripe, but it had not yet dropped. His play was ready, that is to say, and had been accepted for speedy trial: it was to be put into rehearsal at once, and to be produced, if possible, on Christmas Eve. The manager of the theatre, however, had promised only an afternoon performance, seeing that the play was by a 'prentice hand; but Ainsworth was grateful for even that: it was for a beginner a chance in a thousand, and he had the assurance that if the play were successful it would go at once into the evening bill; if it were not successful, it would be relegated to the limbo of plays damned and events forgotten. Taking these things into account, he had resolved that the name of the author should be suppressed and that none but those immediately concerned—Alexander, the manager, and the company of actors—should know who the author was. Therefore he said nothing of the production to Isabel or the Suffields; if it failed they would be none the wiser, and if it succeeded they would know in good time.

Next day his rehearsals began; and what with these and his newspaper duties, he was occupied day and night until the date of the play's production; so no further word had he the opportunity of saying to Isabel until it was too late, almost.

Meanwhile Isabel went in and out as heretofore, and seemed to the general eye as bright and charming, and as much mistress of herself as she had been wont to be. But her heart was sorely vexed. She had almost forgotten the rumors of evil likely to happen to her uncle, and she could, therefore, be more occupied with her own intimate affairs. She had ceased to be very angry with Alan Ainsworth, but she was still surprised and disappointed. She tried to find excuses for him, explanations even, but she succeeded very ill. She had thought that he had held aloof from her, as a woman whom it was not for him to woo because of her wealth, and she had attempted to show him till she was ashamed that in that regard her wealth was nothing to her: she had done that from the first. Now she desperately concluded that, if he cared for her at all, he cared, as she had at first thought, with a friendly interest merely, and by no means with an overpowering love. Perhaps the impulsiveness of his nature made his friendships with

women appear warmer than they really were ; at any rate, in her case he obviously had no intention of urging that his friendship should be given the complexion of love. It might be, she thought humbly, she was not the kind of woman to inspire a man like Ainsworth with a passion.

In this soreness and disappointment of heart she turned with an agreeable sense of comfort to the frank and generous regard which George had for her—with, indeed, something like relief and gratitude. She perfectly understood the question in his letter concerning Christmas. Should she go down to the old hall, then, that had long been as a home to her, and please George, please her uncle and aunt (she knew it would please her aunt now), and please the spirit of Uncle Harry, if he still knew aught of what passed on the earth which had not been too kind to him? Did she love George? She could not declare to herself that she did; but, after all, few people who married seemed to be very much in love. She could say (as Euphemia said of her lover), "he is very fond of me," but she could not find that so satisfying as Euphemia seemed to find it; for she was not the passive kind of woman who find it enough to be appreciated and loved; she was of the rarer kind who must themselves love and appreciate. Yet she admired George's manly and masterful qualities, she respected him, and she certainly liked him. He was not the kind of man she had dreamed she would marry, but still—still, how many women married their dream, or even their first love? And so—and so she obfuscated her true sense of things, darkened her usually clear vision, put her hands before the eyes of heart and soul, and determined she would go down to Lancashire at Christmas.

And in the halls of the Suffields she was anxiously awaited on the day before Christmas Day. George had confided his secret and his anxiety to his mother, and his mother, in motherly fashion, became anxious, too; when she had last seen Isabel she could not get her to promise to come north, and she did not profess to be able to forecast or to tell what Isabel would do.

"I am sorry, my boy," said she, "that I cannot give you any comfort. But I know Isabel too well to venture to say what view she may take of it. She likes you, I am sure—she has shown she does—but whether she thinks she likes you well enough— . . . Bel has notions of her own that there is no reckoning with. I used to think that she and Alan Ainsworth took very much to each

other, but I know she has seen little of him for months since, I believe, she came into Uncle Harry's money."

George's father observed that his son would not sit down, and that he fidgeted about from room to room, and tramped in and out, and considered the weather, and looked at railway time-tables.

"What's th' matter wi' th' lad?" he asked his wife. "He's as restless as a cat on hot bricks!"

Then his wife disclosed to him the secret of the cause. He pursed his lips, nodded twice, and went and laid his hand on his son's shoulder.

"Thy mother," said he, "has told me, lad. Keep thy spirit up, and never say die—and put thy trust i' th' Lord."

Suffield seldom used religious phrases in his ordinary speech, but when he did use them he used them with simplicity.

"All right, dad; all right," said George, grasping his father's hand.

Euphemia, of course, had guessed the secret already, and had her own view (which she kept to herself) of the issue. Thus the whole household waited, and watched the clock, and considered the arrivals of trains. They did not enter upon this acute condition of waiting until after luncheon; for no train leaving London at a reasonable hour could arrive until about half-past two, and then there was the little appendix of a journey out of town to be reckoned. But when luncheon was past, expectation was rendered feverish by the railway time-tables. The Suffields were in the habit of travelling by one particular line, and they knew that by that there arrived an available train almost every hour up till about ten at night. There are, however, three great railways from London into Lancashire, and when they came to examine the time-bills of all three in *Bradshaw*, the total number of suggested trains—one train arriving on the heels of another, or outstripping another, all the day long—made their heads whirl. All but George then gave up the time-tables in despair, and waited with resignation. He openly made out a list in three parallel columns of all the trains, and then put the list in his pocket.

"I would go and meet her at the station," said he, "but she might come by the road."

He went out, therefore, and hung about between two points of vantage in the park whence he could command a sweeping view of the road on the one hand and of the path from the local station on the other. There were tense occasions when, with his list in his

hand and his knowledge of the distance from town in his head, he could lay his finger on a narrow margin of minutes and say, "If she came by *that* train, she should arrive about now." But she did not arrive, and George still waited and hovered to and fro.

His father had wandered into the village to gossip with some of the old folk about their colds, their rheumatisms, and their asthmas, but his mother and sister sympathetically observed him from the windows of the drawing-room.

"Brother George, brother George!" murmured Euphemia in one window where she sat with a neglected novel in her lap. "Do you see anybody coming?"

"You should not make game of your brother, Phemy," said her mother from the other window. "We shouldn't watch him like that, poor lad!" And she rose and walked into the depths of the room. "It seems like sacrilege. We should be ashamed."

"Well, mother," said Phemy, "he shows how he feels very publicly."

"It's his nature, my dear," said her mother, proudly, "to do everything openly."

"He must be very fond of Bel," said Phemy; "fonder than I thought he was. I'm sure Clitheroe never waited about like that for me!"

So it wore on till tea-time and dark. When tea was brought in Phemy called her brother, and he came. But he would not sit down; he swallowed cups of tea, tramped about the room, and looked out of window.

"Happen," said his father, who had returned from the village charged with news to which his wife gave but a preoccupied ear—"happen she thought she'd have lunch first—and I don't blame her; and then she'd catch that train at two—the best train of the day; it gets you here in plenty of time to get ready for dinner. That's the way to travel—from a good meal to a good meal; then you're not too tired by your journey."

"Bel likes her meals good and regular," said Phemy.

"Her school-life," said Mrs. Suffield, "got her into the habit of having everything regular and up to time."

"Bel is the only woman I know, except mother," said George, "that can appreciate the whole of a good dinner. Most women don't care what's set before them; they seem always to prefer tea and talk—tea and talk!" he exclaimed, with great contempt.

"Quite so, my lad," said his father. "And it's very bad for them; but they won't believe it."

"Isabel," said Mrs. Suffield, "knows what's what; I must say that for her. She eats well and wisely. She knows that good food makes good blood; and that good blood means good life for herself, and the chance of good life for her children after her—if she has any."

Upon that all were silent, and George went out again (though it was dark) to his sentry duty between the two points. But still Isabel came not—came not even by the train her uncle had reckoned upon her taking—and the dark became illumined by the moon, and the stars twinkled to see George still at his post. When the moon covered all things with her mystic light George went in and dressed for dinner. Train still succeeded train on his list, racing madly with each other; she might arrive just before, or just at, or a little after the dinner-hour. Dinner was put back to await her, and they all sat—all save George, who hung about out-of-doors with an ear for every sound—all three sat, dressed, hungry, and silent, in the drawing-room.

"He'll get his shirt-front spoiled with the damp," said Mrs. Suffield, "and those birds will be done to rags with waiting!"

Phemy laughed and her mother frowned, and the mantel-clock struck half-past eight.

"Let's have dinner in, Joan," said Suffield. "She has very likely arranged to come by the dining-car express."

"There are three of them on the different lines," said his son, who had just entered, "all within ten minutes of each other."

So they went to dinner, and ate it with little gayety or enjoyment.

"If she doesn't come by one of those three," said George, striving to make up his mind to a definite conclusion, "she won't come to-night."

"Oh," said his father. "Then we can go to bed when we want to. She won't come till to-morrow now—if she come—and to-morrow's a bad day for travelling. What did you say about coming when you wrote to her, lad?"

"I didn't expressly invite her," answered George, with a blush. "I just asked her if she was coming."

"Oh, in that case," said his father. "Happen she doesn't mean to come—not that I mean to put you out of heart, my lad," he added, hurriedly; for George had turned very pale and had pulled his brows together. "But—well, there you are, you know."

"If she had not meant to come she would have written that she was not coming," said Mrs. Suffield, decisively.

"Don't let us discuss it, mother," said George.

Isabel did not come. It was past eleven, and all were thinking gloomily of bed, when old Tummas, the butler (Daniel was gone for a holiday), entered with what he called a "tallygraft"; it had just been brought to the back-door by a special messenger. George tore it open.

"*Am coming by night train,*" he read aloud; "*shall be with you early in the morning.* Isabel."

"The night train!" exclaimed Mrs. Suffield. "It is not very seemly for a young lady to travel by night!"

"Oh, it's all right, mother," said George, cheerfully; and it was only now when it disappeared that the weight of his anxiety became apparent. "Though you know well enough that when she wants to do a thing Isabel is not the one to think whether it is seemly or not. The trouble, however, is," said he, with a laugh, "that she doesn't say which night train; there are three of them, as of the others."

"Ah," said his father. "I've had quite an education to-day in trains; I had no idea there was such a big three-cornered competition, and that there could be so many people wanting to run up and down between this and London!"

George consulted his time-tables again, took his resolution, and went out for a little to give an order to one of the grooms, and then they all went to bed.

At three o'clock on Christmas morning, in the dead, cold waste of what was still night, George Suffield stole softly away in a dog-cart like a midnight marauder. He had told no one his errand, and he drove softly on the grass till he thought he was out of ear-shot of the house, when he flicked his mare with the whip, saying, "Now, my girl," and dashed away out of the park and down the high-road leading to town. He was going to meet Isabel. He would wait for first one night train and then another until she came—until he saw her coming forth to greet him, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." In truth, he trembled at the mere thought of meeting her alone—trembled, half with joy, wholly with expectation. Did she, or did she not, understand how he would interpret her coming? Did she *quite* understand?

The first train arrived at four o'clock at one station, laden with

jovial passengers. But Isabel was not in that train. The next train arrived at a little past five at another station, and thither George leisurely drove to wait. Slowly, with leaden feet, the minutes and the quarters passed, but at length the engine glided into the station and ceased its motion, with a great sigh. George singled out the ladies' sleeping-car, and just as he reached the door Isabel stepped out upon the platform. Not many ladies could have borne the ordeal of being thus seen immediately at the end of a cold night journey, but Isabel could bear it better than most, and it was not the consciousness of being seen under untoward conditions that made her blush so deeply as she did.

"So, Bel," said George, grasping her hand and embracing it with both his, "you have come."

"Yes, George," said she; "I have come."

CHAPTER XXXIII

"LOVE THE GIFT IS LOVE THE DEBT"

WHEN she and her luggage were safely bestowed in the dog-cart, when she had been well wrapped in rugs, and when they had dashed out of the station into the raw darkness which was just beginning to feel the waking breath of morning, then Isabel thanked George for coming for her.

"Nobody knows I've come," said George. "We waited all day yesterday for you, and were just beginning to think you were not coming at all when in came your telegram."

"But that made it all right, did it not?" said she.

"Well," said George, with a joyous laugh, "nearly right. But you didn't set down what line you were coming by; there are three lines, and each has a night train."

"How foolish of me!" she exclaimed. "And you have been waiting about for three trains!" She considered him a moment, as if she found him a more eager lover than she had bargained for. "I found," said she, by way of apology, "that I had a good many things to do yesterday, and I thought I would take the night train for the sake of having a new experience."

"So like you, Bel," laughed George, "to want a new experience."

"Is it?" said she, simply. "I suppose it is."

When they were well out on the clear highway, and one hand was enough to hold the reins, he put down his other hand to seek hers; but she affected not to understand his purpose and let her hands remain hid. The mare knew that she was going home to a bran-mash, and she spanked along at such a rate that speech was impracticable; so the two sat silent, and, wrapped against the cold air, mound and tree, cottage and bush fled fast away from them, looking merely like blacker features and articulations of the general darkness.

None of the household (save a groom to take charge of the mare) was astir when they arrived. Isabel retired at once to

freshen herself with a bath, and to change her dress. She did not come down till the breakfast-bell rang, and then, when she had made her apologies and explanations, there were presented to her a great surprise and determining shock.

They sat at breakfast when Mr. Suffield, who had been running his eye up and down the columns of *The Lancashire Gazette*, murmuring the while, "h'm! ha!" suddenly exclaimed, to the table in general, "Bless my soul! Now, what do you think of this?" And then immediately to Isabel in particular, "What do you think of this, Bel?"

"Well, what is it?" cried all.

"It's in 'Our London Correspondence,'" said Suffield. "Listen: 'The unequivocal and brilliant success of "The Backbiter," at the afternoon performance, yesterday, at the Variety Theatre, has compelled the management to disclose the name of the author. The audience insisted with stamping of feet and reiterated cries of "Author! Name! . . . Name! Author!" and the manager stepped before the curtain, and said that the author was not in the house, but he would give his name—"Alan Ainsworth."' There!" said Suffield. "What do you think of that? Did you know his play was going to be produced yesterday, Bel?"

"No," she answered; "I did not. I did not even know it was finished." She had an overwhelming sense of pain and desolation, as if this were the final cut that severed all connection between herself and Ainsworth; he had not thought it worth his while to give her his confidence even in this small matter. She had come down extremely doubtful what answer she should give to George; now she had no doubt whatever.

"The play," Suffield resumed, "'will be placed at once in the evening bill of the theatre, and while the enterprising manager may be congratulated on having secured a piece that is certain to run for many days and to take a place in the repertory of the theatre, Mr. Ainsworth is no less to be felicitated on having in all human probability won fortune as well as fame. Mr. Ainsworth was known, though it may be but anonymously, as a brilliant member of the staff of this journal until less than a year ago, when he was invited to assume a responsible position on the metropolitan press. Mr. Ainsworth has shown he can do admirable work, and his friends, of whom the present writer has the privilege of counting himself one, are confident he will go far.' There!" cried Suffield, slapping the paper on the table. "What do you think of that?"

"The hand is the hand of the London correspondent," thought Isabel, vaguely, to herself, "but the voice is the voice of Alexander. He deserves his success," said she, aloud; "he has worked hard for it."

She spoke quietly but frankly, and no one guessed there was the pain of separation at her heart.

"I always said," observed Mr. Suffield, "that Alan would turn up trumps—though he might have let us know about his *matinée*. Let's spend a shilling (it's Christmas, you know), in congratulating him."

"And he's going to make his fortune!" said Mrs. Suffield, meditatively, with her eye on Isabel. "I have heard that a very successful dramatist makes in these days of high prices and 'no fees' as much as fifteen thousand a year!"

"No, mother!" exclaimed Euphemia.

"That must be a *very* successful dramatist, indeed, my dear," said Mr. Suffield.

"What about this telegram of congratulation?" said George.

They discussed the wording of the telegram for some time; for Mr. Suffield—who had found a telegraph form and a pencil which he meant to use himself—would hear of nothing but "Many happy returns. *Returns*, don't you see? There's nothing a manager or a playwright values so much as *returns* and *many* of them." It was at length conceded that the phrase upon which he had set his heart should stand, but that there be set in front of it this: "We congratulate you on the production of your play." That done, they all signed it as if the handwriting could be transmitted, in manner following: "George Suffield; Joan Suffield; Euphemia; George."

George paused before handing it to Isabel to count the words. Reckoning the address, there was only room for one word more to complete the shilling's worth.

"There is only one more word wanted," said he; "you had better sign 'Isabel.' That will do very well," he added, with a smile; "it will look like a Suffield manifesto."

Isabel did not like it; but she wrote as was suggested, saying to herself, "What does it matter?"

After breakfast she went into the garden with Euphemia, and sauntered up and down among the flower-beds, as we saw her at the beginning of this story; but the beds were now bare and waste as her heart. There George soon found them; and seeing him

coming, Phemy found an excuse for leaving her, and she prepared for what she knew was coming.

"Do you remember," he said, "it was last Whitsuntide that I saw you and Phemy here; it was in the beginning of the day that I spoke to you of something. Do you remember it?" he asked.

"Yes," said she, with self-possession; "I remember it." She remembered, too, that on that occasion she had come upon Alan Ainsworth in the conservatory.

"I asked you a question then, Bel, and you put me off; and then I begged that I might put it again in a year. It is less than a year; but I have found a year too long to wait. Tell me, Bel, am I right in thinking that you *quite* understand why I have asked you to come here this Christmas?"

"Quite," she answered.

"Then," said he, intensely moved, "I may ask the question?"

He took her hand and paused; the pause was not long, but it seemed long to Isabel.

"May I take the question as asked?" said she, looking down and making arabesques with her toe on the gravel.

"Bel," he murmured, "then—then you accept me?"

"I do, George," she answered. For an instant she looked him frankly in the face, and then dropped her eyes again.

"Oh, my dear!" he exclaimed, and folded her in his arms before she was aware.

To that she submitted, but when he ventured to press closer and to seek to kiss her, a sudden dislike of his embrace seized her, and she put him away.

"Not now, George!" said she. "Not now!" and fled into the house.

George might have thought there should have been more in the asking of a wife than he had found, but if he did think so he did not show it. He went about exuding happiness. That he had come to the understanding he desired with Isabel was apparent; yet it was formally made known to his parents. Suffield took Isabel aside to welcome her as his prospective daughter-in-law.

"I'm glad, my dear," said he, pressing her hand; "it's what I've wished for. Though lately," he added, "I had got to think that it was going to be Ainsworth."

It was a busy Christmas Day. They all went to church in the morning, and exchanged greetings and salutations of "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" on this side and on that. They

returned to find the post-bag just arrived—the post is always late on Christmas Day. The bag was crammed with Christmas cards and greetings addressed to every member of the family—for the Suffields now had troops of friends. For Isabel there was but one; yet even that she was surprised to receive, for she had told no one she was coming to Lancashire for Christmas. When she recognized the handwriting of the superscription her heart beat ominously: it was Alan Ainsworth's. She opened it before them all, recklessly, for they all were occupied with their own communications. Her envelope contained a letter as well as a card of greeting. She read the letter eagerly, greedily.

"I owe you," it ran, "and my good friends with whom your servant has told me you are staying" (he had called, then!), "an apology for the business of this afternoon. It seems rude and very ungrateful, perhaps, but my only reason for not confiding to you the secret of the production was that I was afraid the play might fail. That was why I also suppressed my name. I don't think I could have looked any of you in the face again if you had known, and all the world had known, that it had failed. I know you will all rejoice with me that it has not failed, and that there seems the prospect of a long run before it. There are seats ready for you as soon as you are ready to accept them. Are you returning to town soon? I wish to see you, to explain matters."

When Isabel read that aloud (except the final sentence) to the family, George was silent and frowned a little, though no exception could be taken to anything he had heard read.

"We're going back to London on the last day of the year," said Mrs. Suffield; "we have several engagements to fulfil. Will that suit you, Bel?"

"Oh, quite," answered Bel.

The rest of that eventful day was crammed with gayety and feasting. A good many guests came to dinner, and after dinner there was merry dancing; and so the time passed without thought. It was not till she had retired to her room very late that Isabel had leisure to consider what she had done and who she was. She was the affianced wife of her Cousin George! She had promised to marry him!—to tie her life to his! She did not shudder at the thought of him; she was only dully miserable. This seemed to her a very poor conclusion to have reached. She was like a religious enthusiast who, after having had visions of heavenly glory, dreams of a divine presence, and expectations of fulfilled prayer,

suddenly finds himself shut in with a mere reality of earth which causes him to doubt all he had formerly believed, and to despair of all he had formerly hoped for. When she had lived her simple, tedious, untrammelled life of school-mistress, what thrills of joy were hers, what dreams of happiness! It was only now she recognized how much she must have dreamed when she knew she was tied to a reality which was the fulfilment of nothing she had ever dreamed of or had longed for. Oh, what romantic visions she had had of heaven and earth filled with delight!—of love, that with its light and warmth would blend all the varied experiences of life into one joy—of “love the gift, and love the debt!” Now all that was done with; the whole world was become gray and dull, and shrunken to a wretched round of going out and coming in, eating and drinking, sleeping and waking! And she herself, in her folly and blindness, had wilfully chosen this result! No one but herself was to blame! Why had she been so precipitate? Alan Ainsworth promised explanations! Perhaps she had misunderstood him!

“Ah, my love! My love!” she moaned in her anguish, pressing her hands to her eyes as she paced up and down her room. “What have I done? What *have* I done?”

Yet George seemed satisfied and happy. He was not to blame; and how could she take his happiness from him? She knew, now that she had been put to the touch, that she did not love him at all as a woman ought to love a man with whom she means to identify her life; but that was not because he was unworthy of her love. She now saw, too, that in committing outrage on herself she was doing wrong to George, who by her was prevented from knowing the unreserved, romantic love of another woman. Yet George was happy in loving her and in believing she loved him.

Next morning she went down to breakfast, resolved to show no sadness or regret; it would be the merest selfishness to trouble others with her vain feelings. It was remarked that she looked pale and had dark circles under her dark eyes; but she declared it was nothing; she had not slept well, she said, and her head ached.

The day was filled with engagements: a mid-day dinner in the school-room to the work-people, and a tea afterwards to the children, and last of all a family visit to the theatre. But yet there were intervals for private conference, of which George assiduously tried to avail himself. He sought to enjoy the accepted lover's

privilege of sitting close to and embracing his mistress ; but these endeavors Isabel did her utmost to defeat. And George was not offended ; for he set her conduct down merely to the coyness usual in a maiden. Isabel made one or two faint efforts to shake his belief in her.

"Are you quite sure," she asked once, "that I am quite the woman you ought to marry?"

"Look here, Bel," said he ; "don't ask such absurd questions ; they are not suited to my intelligence. I have not known a great many women, but I don't need to know any more to be able to tell that the woman I have chosen is the one woman in the world for me."

After that what could she say that would not be simply a repudiation of her promise to him?

At the same time she was troubled with the necessity of sending Alan Ainsworth an answer to his question : when would she be at home ? Should she write to him that she was engaged to marry her cousin, and she had better communicate with him no more ? But would not that be attributing an infinite importance to the situation which he might fail to understand ? She ended by sending him a line merely : "I shall be home on the last evening of the year."

CHAPTER XXXIV

"EVEN SO!"

ON the last night of the year, after dinner, Isabel sat with her aged companion waiting. She sat with *The Sand-paper Review* in her lap, from which she had been reading a very grudging and supercilious criticism of Alan Ainsworth's play. A tall lamp was lighted, and diffused a soft, rich glow through its wide flounced shade of amber-colored silk. Isabel was arrayed in a golden-tinted tea-gown of the material which ladies know as *crêpe*, and her abundant dark hair was arranged with a seductive negligence peculiarly her own. She wore no ornament but her beauty. Her only jewels were her dark lustrous eyes; when she rose to go to the piano the yielding material of her gown subtly suggested the lovely lines of her supple but superb figure, and her expression of mediative melancholy gave her more than a touch of imperial repose, which seemed to crown her with perfection. She had resolved to tell Alan that night of her engagement to her Cousin George, and to soothe her mind and nerves, strung high with expectation, she now lighted the shaded candles, opened the piano, and sat down to play from Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words." From these she passed to the beautiful air which Mendelssohn wrote for Burns's exquisite song,

"Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee!"

She was thus occupied when Alan Ainsworth entered. She ceased at once and rose to greet him, and the aged companion discreetly slipped away. He looked much more festive than usual. He was attired in evening dress, which became his tall, lithe, broad-shouldered figure much better than it becomes most figures upon which it is seen; he had a white flower in his button-hole; his fair hair was somewhat rumpled; and there was a flush

of excitement on his cheek, and a sparkle of excitement in his eye. When she saw him she forgot all the pain and constraint of her last meeting with him.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "You have shaved!"

Yes; his mustache was gone; and there was revealed a strongly - curved lip which suggested stern-resolution and a something else which Isabel could not name.

"Yes," laughed he freely; "I have. I suppose it's the influence and example of the men I've been mixing with lately."

"Are you easily influenced?" she said, still considering him. "I don't like it!" she exclaimed, without thinking whether her liking or disliking it concerned Ainsworth.

"If you don't like it," said he, "I'll shave no more; I'll let it grow again. Shall I?"

Isabel felt that the air was becoming electrical, and she moved to the window to open it, saying:

"I think you had better."

"Let me do that," said he, following her. "Though it will be an hour or two before the bells ring out the year."

He opened the window, and stood by it with her. He looked at her; he had been looking at her since he had come in, but his look had been the only homage he paid to her appearance. Now, however, he spoke, saying:

"That is a very becoming gown you are wearing;" and he blushed when he had said it. "I haven't seen it before."

"Have you not?" said she, with a spice of mischief in her manner. "Are you sure?"

"I am sure," he answered. "I know all the frocks and gowns I have ever seen you in, and all the frills and furbelows."

That was a fuller answer than she had expected. But though disturbed she was not displeased by it, and she began to perceive very plainly that it would be difficult to tell him of her engagement to Cousin George. Though the air still felt very electrical, she moved away from the window.

"Come and sit down," said she, "and tell me about your play. I have been reading what *The Sand-paper* critic has to say." And she took up the paper and sat down, and Ainsworth sat down near her, with an evident consciousness of being near.

"Don't say 'critic,'" said he; "say 'fault-finder.' For the whole art of criticism, according to *The Sand-paper*, is the art of finding fault and pooh-poohing."

"I remember," said Isabel, with a smile, "a certain critic in Lancashire less than a year ago who was a good deal troubled because his editor complained he was too much given to finding fault: *he* thought he was only a judicious critic."

"Your thrust," said he, with a laugh, "is quite fair. But whenever I *did* find fault—"

"You did it," interrupted Isabel, "with the best intentions in the world. And hasn't *The Sand-paper* fault-finder done that?"

"No," said Ainsworth decidedly, and almost angrily; "he has not. He has done it because we had a passage of arms some time ago in the papers, when I called him a 'wooden nutmeg,' said he measured everything with his office-ruler, in effect hinted he didn't know how to either write or be honest!"

While saying that he took the paper from Isabel's hand and rolled it up lengthwise till it was of the similitude of an office-ruler.

"See," said Isabel, with a bewitching smile, "how these writers love one another!"

"You would have read an at least more civil notice in *The Sand-paper*," said Ainsworth, "if my name had remained suppressed; the manager made it known quite without my leave."

"You told me in your note," said she; "but I don't quite understand why you suppressed your name; at least, I don't see that you had sufficient reason for it—and especially for keeping the date of the production hid," she added, in a tone somewhat aggrieved.

"No; you don't understand that," said he; "but I could not put it all in the note I wrote you."

He unrolled and rolled again the paper in his hands, and looked at her with an earnestness which made her at once fear what he might say, and yet long to hear it.

"When I began that play," said he, looking at the paper which he rolled and unrolled, "months ago, I began it with a very definite object in view. I worked at it day after day and night after night with my eye on that object. Sometimes I should have liked very much to come and discuss it with you, but that did not suit my purpose; it had to be planned and written all by myself without suggestion or help from another. My immediate purpose was to make, if possible, a popular success."

"Oh, fie!" said Isabel, scarce knowing what she said. "To seek a popular success is reckoned very unworthy—is it not?—and is very unfashionable among literary people!"

"I have no patience," said Ainsworth, very earnestly, "with that

shallow and absurd pretence! It is good and pleasant to know that very many, instead of very few, people like your work, if so be you do your work honestly. Why should it be thought less worthy to touch the hearts of the simple many than to tickle the heads of the knowing and cynical few? But it is not really so thought. It is all a pretence, made by some men to enable them to bear up against the disappointment of having their work received with indifference."

"You think," said Isabel, half consciously endeavoring to lengthen out his explanation, to postpone that end which alarmed while it fascinated her, "that it is a case of *Nolo episcopari*? 'I don't want to be a bishop; I wouldn't be a bishop if I could.'"

"It is," said he. "I know men who are pining and fretting for a popular success, and who yet—or, perhaps, I should say 'therefore'—are constantly sneering at what I heard one call the 'humiliation' of popularity. Mind you; if a man sets himself to win popularity, and wins it, by insincere work and false sentiment—and he does sometimes; for the big public is not well able to distinguish between the false and the true—then that man is to be denounced and bullied. I can honestly say," he continued, "that my work was not done insincerely. I set myself at the first to expound a subject that would appeal to many, and to express sentiments that would touch many, and then I wrote it all as sincerely and as well as I knew how."

"I really believe you did, Mr. Ainsworth," said Isabel. "I don't think you could be insincere. If you had written insincerely, I have no doubt you would have failed."

"I *might* have failed!" said he, with the look of a man who has escaped a great peril. "If I had failed, you would have heard of me no more! That was why I kept the thing from you!"

Again he looked at her earnestly and long. She returned his look with something of dread in her eyes; and her breath began to come fast and thick, and her breast to heave under the soft folds of her gown. Then he fell to rolling and unrolling the paper again.

"I think," he continued, in a low tone, "that I *would* have failed—I was so despondent about it sometimes—I would have failed but that I had a great inducement and inspiration to go on."

He paused, and she, in her dread of the pause, said lightly, "What? The hope of fame and fortune?"

"Fame and fortune!" he exclaimed, with a laugh. "As for fort-

une—look here. I have just come from the treasury—the treasury of the theatre.” He took from his vest-pocket a folded paper, unfolded it, and handed it to her; it was a check for £60. “That,” said he, with a shy touch of simple, boyish glee, “is for this week. I shall get a similar slip of paper every week. Is not that fortunate?”

She was inclined to be offended, till she looked in his face and saw the boyish pleasure expressed on it, and then she understood that he had but impulsively set that before her, even as he would cast all his tribute at her feet.

“So,” said she, with a deliciously sharp sense of wilfully misunderstanding him, “you have now got all you worked for?”

“Worked for?” he exclaimed. “What? That? That is but the sign or token of the real, the intangible end I had in view! Don’t you understand? Haven’t you seen that I felt bound to become as much of your equal as I could be? Have you not seen that? Now! Now,” he said, softly, letting the paper drop and taking her hand impulsively, “I come to you!”

“Oh,” said she, closing her eyes, “I must not let you speak like that! It is wrong! It is wrong!”

A shudder as of horror passed over her, while she grasped his hand convulsively.

“What have I done?” he said. “Have I been a fool?”

“Oh no! It is not you. It is myself! It is myself! I should not have listened to you! But it was so sweet to hear you.”

“Isabel! Tell me—tell me frankly! Do not shrink from telling me out of mistaken kindness! If it be that you do not love me . . . ! . . . that you cannot . . . !”

“Oh yes!” she cried (and gave him one wild look), “I love you, my dear! I love you! . . . No, no!” she cried; for he had kissed her hand, and now sought to embrace her and to kiss her lips. “You must not do that!” She rose hurriedly, and paced to and fro, and he rose, too. “I should have told you at once! . . . I have sinned against Heaven! . . . I have sinned against the light! But I did not understand! . . . I have been living in a vague dream! I have been as if walking in sleep, but one word from you would have waked me? Oh, my dear, my dear!—why—why did you not say that one word to me?”

She threw herself sobbing on his breast for one brief moment, while he strained her close. Her wild emotion tended to produce in him an intense calm. He strove to see and to think clearly.

"Tell me—tell me," he murmured. "Is it that something has happened while you have been down in Lancashire?"

With one great sob she released herself to answer him.

"How foolish and vain a creature a woman is!" she exclaimed. "I thought I understood! I thought I was wise! I thought I knew perfectly what I was doing! But I did not! . . . Yes; it was in Lancashire!"

"Your cousin," said Alan, "said last Whitsuntide that he would ask you again in a year!"

"Yes, yes," she answered; "you remember; you heard him, and then I saw your look! . . . It was in the conservatory!"

"And he has asked you—though it is not a year?"

"Yes, yes!" she answered again. "I was asleep! I was blind!"

"Isabel! My own! My life!" seizing her hands. "You must give him up! . . . You are not married to him?" he cried, in sudden alarm.

"No, no!" she exclaimed with a shudder. "Oh no! Not that! . . . Not yet!"

"Then you must give him up! You must, my sweetheart—my love! You must!"

"How can I? He is not to blame! And he is happy in my promise! How can I destroy his happiness?"

"And how can you destroy your own happiness—and mine? . . . See, my own—my dear! To go on with him will be to commit the sin unpardonable! It will be nothing, and will breed nothing but misery! If you should marry him . . . ! Do you think that a husband will not quickly find out when his wife does not love him? . . . A loveless marriage! A loveless life! A loveless family! . . . Into a loveless family—children with the cold affections of fish!—discord comes, and envy, and dislike? So fools and worldlings marry, and so the earth is filled with strife! . . . If you had loved him, and not me, I would have gone away and said no word! . . . But can I see you, my own, my beloved, put your feet on this horrible way that leads to hell upon earth, and not try to hold you back by every means in my power? . . . I love you, you love me, and I will not let you go!" he said, as he drew her to him again, and she sank her head an instant on his breast. He kissed her hair.

"No, no, no!" she said, resuming possession of herself. "This must not be, my dear! . . . I am losing myself! . . . I am for-

getting! There is another thing that has troubled me . . . that has helped to lead me asleep—asleep and blind, my dear—into this great sin!”

“What is that?”

She swept to the writing-table, unlocked it, took out Uncle Harry’s Journal, and from its pocket drew the sheet of note-paper.

“You know this book!” said she. “You have read some of it! It is Uncle Harry’s last Journal! . . . Two or three weeks ago I found that in this pocket! Read it.”

He read it slowly—a first time, and a second; and then he looked at her.

“Your uncle says, ‘If you see your way.’ Did you see your way, my dear?” he asked.

“I thought I did,” said she. “I was carried along fast . . . and blind! . . . I heard at that time that Uncle George might be ruined . . . by speculation! . . . I thought you were quite indifferent to me, and I resolved to give up everything . . . my money and myself both . . . to the family that had loved me and cared for me all my life long!”

“You were going to surrender both yourself and your wealth? Might not your wealth have been enough, my dear?”

“The money is not needed . . . there is no ruin threatening! . . . But the last time I saw you you were specially cold and reserved with me, and I could not endure it!”

“I was wrong, I see,” said he; “I have been wrong all through! . . . Proud, conceited fool I have been to imagine it was necessary to make myself your equal in wealth!”

“Your error is nothing to mine!” she said. “But I did not understand, until it was done, what a horrible thing I was doing! I was asleep! . . . You said no word to wake me! . . . And I believed that you were thinking we ought not even to be friends!”

“Oh, my Isabel!” cried he, taking her hands in his. “How dear and sweet you become when I see you can make a mistake too, . . . and a big one.”

“This is more than a mistake!” said she, shaking her head.

“Now, my sweetheart! . . . my dear!” said he, “I refuse to take this tragically! This”—turning and fingering Uncle Harry’s unfinished letter—“has no right to influence your decision. Will you be guided by my advice?”

“Yes,” said she, with a touch of abandonment in her manner; “advise me, my dear! . . . advise me!”

"Give the money up!... as you had intended.... I also have heard suspicions of dangerous speculation on your cousin's side (I suppose that is what you mean), and the money may be needed soon.... Then say to your cousin, 'I have no fortune! We thought I had!... Let our engagement cease! We both made it under a mistake!'"

"No, no, Alan!" she cried. "Surely—surely—that would be mean! You do not understand him!... You are not just to him!... I believe he loves me truly!... That's the pain of it!... The pain of giving him pain!... To wrong him, and then to insult him!... That would be to insult him!... No, no! I cannot do that!"

"The pain of it is," said he, "that some one must be pained!"

"Then," said she, "I should be that person!... It is I who have done wrong!... I should suffer!... But then," she added, with a thin, appealing smile, "you would suffer, too—would you not?"

"So," said he, "out of your own mouth, my love, I can show you what you must do!... Which is better? That he should suffer pain for a little, from having lost a woman who did not love him, or that we both should suffer all our lives long?"

"Then," said she, sitting down wearily, what about my dear uncle, and my aunt, and Phemy? I shall hurt and offend them!"

"Do you know," said he, sitting down by her and speaking with decision, "what I shall do?... I shall tell your cousin that you do not love him!... that you cannot marry him! And then, my dear—then I will carry you off, whether you will or not!"

"Yes, yes! my dear! my dear!" she cried, resting her head against his shoulder. "Take me away!... Make me go with you!... But, no, no!... That would look as if I ran away because I was afraid!... But help me! Decide for me, dear!... I thought I was strong, but I am not!... I have no decision—no will!... Do not leave me to myself!"

"My sweet one! my dove!" he murmured, gently caressing her. "'Who comes to me as to her haven!...' Shall I tell you what you must do first? Get rid of that money!... I hate it!... It has come between us ever since it appeared!... Get rid of it.... Make your uncle take it!... One thing at a time. Will you try to do that, my sweet?"

"I will!... My dear!"

"So, let us say no more about it now! I will come in to-mor-

row, shall I? . . . To-night you should rest. Your nerves have been too much tried."

"Do not go yet!" she murmured. "It is not late! . . . Stay with me a little!"

"I would stay forever and ever, my dear!" said he. "Would not a little music soothe you? What was that you were playing as I came in?"

"Oh yes!" said she, rising at once and going to the piano. "It is beautiful. You shall sing it."

So they sat down in tolerable calm. She played the air, and he (who was not a practised singer, but who was ready to do aught to please her) sang the song after a shy failure or two. The last quatrain he sang to her with point:

"Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen!"

CHAPTER XXXV

THE TAME PHILOSOPHER IN DANIEL'S DEN

ALAN AINSWORTH went to his rooms that night treading on air, singing, and making melody in his heart. He loved his love and his love loved him—loved him truly, freely, and unreservedly as only a noble, generous-tempered woman does love. There were difficulties to be turned rather than surmounted; but they only added a zest to his feeling, for he was in no doubt about the issue. His sweetheart had surrendered herself to be guided by him: she had sweetly bent to him, and he was a new man. He felt strong, and he rejoiced. His two successes coming together had this great effect on him. He had been very doubtful whether the public would care for his play: they had received it with acclamation; he had frequently been despondent in his love, had often wondered if a rare creature like Isabel could find in him anything at all! and she, who had hitherto appeared stronger than he—stronger in mind and in heart—had yielded to him as the lord of her life. So he was strong and of a good courage, of a temper to be daunted by nothing that might arise. He knew that it was rather because of her own generous quality than because of his supreme desert that Isabel had yielded herself so ungrudgingly, but yet the effect on him was the same as if his own merit and his own hand had gotten him the victory. Herein is the infinite reward of true love: that with the flattery of feeling on the one side, and on the other of homage and devotion, we come to believe our poor little best qualities to be active and inevitable; and so believing we cultivate them into activity and strength.

As for Isabel, when her lover had departed, she began to brood despondently upon the pain she must give to George. It seemed more difficult than ever that she should break with him. She imagined herself going to him and saying, "You have generously loved me, I believe, all your life, since we were boy and girl together; and you asked me to be your wife, and I have agreed and have led you to suppose that I loved you. I now find that I do not love

you truly, and that I cannot marry you! For your faithful love of a life all I can give you is a broken promise!" and she shrank from it with shame and alarm. It would be easier to write that, but it would be cowardly to seek to shun the full shame of speech; and she could not come to speech with George at once. But, as Alan had said, "one thing at a time." She had promised to go to her uncle on the morrow and make him take over her money. But would not her uncle laugh at her, and think her gone mad? Yet she had promised, and she would go, and perhaps something might come of it.

On the afternoon of next day, therefore, she went to Rutland Gate. She asked the important person in black who opened the door if her uncle were in; and he replied that Mr. Suffield was not at home, was gone back to Lancashire, but that Mrs. Suffield was at home. That seemed to her strange and ominous; but she followed the footman into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Suffield sat alone, with a book in her lap, as if she were reading.

"Is anything the matter, aunt?" asked Isabel, "that uncle has rushed off again to Lancashire?"

"Is anything the matter, my dear," retorted her aunt, "that you have rushed in now, when we only parted from you yesterday?"

"Yes," said Isabel, on the inspiration of the moment; "for some time I have had a feeling that something was going to happen to uncle. The feeling has come and gone, but to-day it has been especially strong. Is anything wrong? You know all my money—all I have—I would gladly give to help uncle!"

Her aunt considered her closely, and then went to her and kissed her with tears in her eyes.

"You are a good girl," said she. "All I know is that that McFie came to him this morning with some strange story; that he was very much upset, and said he must go down to the north at once. I never," said Mrs. Suffield, anxiously, "never knew him to do a thing like that before—go off without telling me what was the matter."

While Isabel is talking with her aunt it is necessary that we should occupy ourselves with this business of McFie's. He had come to the house betimes that morning, looking (as the footman said to his master) "very hill, indeed, sir—wuss than usual, and 'ead is tied hup!"

The Tame Philosopher had, for once, a story to tell instead of a rhapsody to deliver. But his manner of narration partook largely of the rhapsodical from sheer habit; for certainly he was too much moved and too much in earnest to be consciously choosing his words.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Suffield, when he saw how pale he looked with his head tied up in a white handkerchief. "What in the world have you been doing with yourself?"

"Ah, my dear sir," said McFie, wringing his patron's hand, "the pains of Gehenna have gat hold upon me! I have had an adventure, sir, which to my poor experience in that kind surpasses everything I have ever read of *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*—of barbers and negroes and one-eyed calendrers. It is so strange that you cannot imagine it even in dimmest, most indefinite prefigurement. And when I tell it to you you are likely to listen with incredulous ear."

"Well, my friend," said Suffield, "I make no promise of listening with one sort of ear or another; but I must bargain that you tell me only the truth. Come into the library."

"*'What is truth?'* said jesting Pilate," quoted McFie, as he followed his patron, "'and would not stay for an answer.' I would have you observe sir," said he, when they were in the library, "that I am about to give you an unvarnished narrative of my adventure, and I have to bespeak your earnest attention, because it concerns yourself, sir."

"Concerns me, does it? Well, fire away, and let me hear."

The philosopher was too much interested in his adventure even to correct his patron's unliterary expression. He began his narrative, and Suffield listened with interest. In effect it was as follows:

On Thursday evening (that was Tuesday) the philosopher, having his time on his hands while his patron was making holiday in Lancashire, and having read in the newspapers of the success of his young friend Ainsworth's play, resolved that he would spend half a crown for a seat in the pit to witness the play and judge if the approval of the public was justified. When he took his place in the throng, waiting for the doors to open, he observed a little way in front of him a white turban. When he had pushed his way in and taken possession of a seat he found himself immediately behind the white turban. While studying his bill of the play and his half-penny newspaper, and considering the talk

and the countenances of his neighbors before the play began, he negligently observed that the owner of the white turban—who, he could casually see, had the dark face of an Indian or Hindoo—kept taking surreptitious sucks at a bottle which he produced from the pocket of the dark overcoat he wore. The play began and he was interested in it, and incurious about the owner of the white turban, who had seemed progressing so rapidly on the way to tipsiness. But at the end of the first act, when all around began to discuss the play, the owner of the white turban began also. He addressed himself to his neighbor, a harmless, good-natured-seeming young man, who rather encouraged than resented his conversation.

"This is silliness," said the white turban. "I am regret that I give away my half the crown to sit here to listen with regard to this. Do you think the same, sir? I must say the times the halls of music visited I pay one shilling—not half the crown!—and I am handy for the pipe and the glass, and I am not squeeze by my respected* ones next me. With regard this is not good, not economical. And in the halls of music they make me laugh down to my stomach; with regard here, if care should be taken, I make a simper of pleasure. This is silliness!"

There was no mistaking that guileless voice and that wonderful turn for correct English; a single peep round the dark man's cheek assured the philosopher that the owner of the white turban was none other than Daniel Trichinopoly.

"Of course, Daniel," said Suffield. "Taking his Christmas holiday in London, and enjoying himself in his own way. But how, my friend, does that concern me? My son told me he was in London."

"Oh, did he?" said the philosopher. "Well, my dear sir, I am not at the end of my story yet. Wait, sir, and listen."

At the end of the second act, during which Daniel frequently partook of his private refreshment, the same kind of talk was resumed, Daniel adding to such comparative criticism as he had before uttered that he knew the gentleman who had "made" the play, and that he hoped that he and his friends were well, and that they would continue very well. As for him (Daniel) he did not care for anybody; he could spend his "half the crown" or his "one-shilling" with as much freedom as any "Ki-lis-tian" gentleman in the queen's empire, and—with that the play went on again.

"Still I don't see, my friend," said Suffield, "what the tipsy twaddle talked by Black Daniel has to do with me."

"My dear sir," said the philosopher, "you will see in a precious moment."

It was after the third act that Daniel, being then very tipsy and communicative, drew from his inner pocket a large envelope, from which he took some folded sheets of tissue-paper. He spread them before his neighbor and boasted of the value of the drawings on them.

"I beg to mention," said Daniel, "that these pictures, lines, circles, etcetera, etcetera—in red ink and in black—are with regard to a very clever machine, valuable for the manufacture. With attention to these, I now take away and make, and I may say I shall have, a small or large fortune by the favor of it."

A strong suspicion made the philosopher rise to look at these drawings over Daniel's shoulder. He discovered that the lines had clearly been first traced with pencil and then over with ink by a somewhat awkward hand, and that they were undoubtedly copies of drawings he had seen before. What drawings?

"Now what drawings would you guess, sir, in your acutest and directest vein of guessing?"

"What drawings should they be," asked Suffield, "that I know about? What should be done wi' a sheep's-head but make broth o't?"

"Mr. Suffield," said the philosopher, "with listening to the havers of fools and rogues in Parliament, I must tell you your wits have become dulled. Your business activity, since it ceased to be active, has lost its sharpness. What drawings should they be that I'd take trouble to tell you this screed of a story about but the drawings of your own cherished, secret machine?"

"What? The black scoundrel! He has copied the drawings, has he? That's George's carelessness! But go on wi' thy story. What didst tha do?"

The philosopher answered he could do nothing there and then; but he considered that since Daniel had stolen copies of the drawings for use, he could hardly intend to return to his post in Lancashire. Waiting, therefore, till the play was over, he followed the white turban from the theatre and down the Strand to Chancery Lane, where it mounted to the top of an omnibus going eastward, and he followed. The philosopher confessed that he had no thought of committing violence (even if he had been able), he was only

steadily resolved to see where the black Daniel was going to bestow himself. On the 'bus they sat almost back to back, and the philosopher could not but imagine that a powerful man might just twist himself round in his seat, put his arm about and garrote the head that wore the white turban, and abstract the large envelope from the inner pocket. Thus they rode eastward, and still eastward, Daniel murmuring to himself without ceasing all the way. Somewhere in Whitechapel (the philosopher could not tell where) the white turban descended from the 'bus, and the philosopher followed. He followed along strange alleys by queer turnings, slippery and noisome, until he began to suspect that the white turban was aware it was followed; how it had become aware the philosopher could not guess; but the philosopher had never before tried to be a detective. The white turban twisted this way and that, and now and then drew up in a pause, when the philosopher drew up, too, and caught the gleam of a bright eye from under the turban. At length the white turban disappeared into a doorway; the philosopher moved carefully up to observe the number, when the white turban pounced out upon him, the hands of Daniel gripped his arm to his sides, and the voice of Daniel murmured:

"Ah, it is the old Guru!" It is the sayer of wise things! It is the wise one himself alone without his disciple! I am regret to say that my entertainment is very little for a Guru. But with regards come to see where I have the dwelling."

There was that in Daniel's eye and manner which hinted that his invitation was not to be refused, and the philosopher, who was not a man of great physical courage, yielded to the gentle urgency and pressure of Daniel's muscular black hands, and went along with him, saying, "Certainly; I will look at your dwelling."

"Do you know what you should have done?" said Suffield, who was now marching up and down the room. "You should have called a policeman and given him in charge for being in possession of property of which he could not give a reasonable account. That would have nailed him."

"But," said the philosopher, "there was no policeman to be seen; it was a terrible savage region!"

"I mean," said Suffield, "you should have done that as soon as you left the theatre, instead of following him all the way to the Docks; that, I suppose, is whereabouts you were."

"Not quite," answered the philosopher. "But I should have denounced him to a man-in-blue at once, should I? I did not know,"

said he, despondently. "I am not familiar with the methods of dealing with crime and its detection. And the whole business," he added with a flash of virtuous indignation, "was as smoke in the eyes and stench in the nostrils!"

"However," said Suffield, "go on wi' thy story."

The philosopher passed on, while Daniel guided him by the arm, into a narrow court or alley. They went on, stumbling in darkness and dirt, until they arrived at a door above which was a small oil-lamp. Daniel lifted the latch and walked in, and the philosopher, to his amazement, saw he was in a place like the fore-castle of a ship. The room was filled with a peculiar brown vapor, or smoke, such as the philosopher had never before seen, smelt, or tasted.

"Opium," said Suffield.

"And that is just what it was, my dear sir," said the philosopher.

Daniel entered into converse in an unintelligible tongue with the Chinese master of the place, who came and bowed and grinned before the philosopher, and said, "Come, smokee pipee. Velly cheap; not velly dear!" The philosopher protested that he did not wish to smoke a pipe of the noxious drug; that, while thanking his "friend" for the offer, he would much rather not. But the Chinese master of the place insisted with Celestial politeness, and took the philosopher by the sleeve to lead him along. The philosopher resisted, and angrily remonstrated; while sundry dark heads and lack-lustre eyes lolled over the edge of certain bunks. At that he received a blow on the head which made him drop, stunned; he believed the treacherous Daniel had dealt it.

"Humph!" exclaimed Suffield. "And that accounts, I suppose, for the clout about your head. And you saw the Daniel Nathaniel no more. I thought that was to be the end!"

"But that, my dear sir," said McFie, "was not quite the end. I came to myself—"

"It was the end so far as Daniel was concerned," said Suffield, still marching up and down. "He had got rid of you. And you came to yourself, I'll be bound, with being made to swallow opium smoke, or a bit of opium; and they kept you there sick and sleepy, and you did not get out of that for some time."

"Now," exclaimed the philosopher, "it is very clever of you to guess that, for that is just what occurred. The Celestial person made me smoke one—two pipes of his obnoxious preparation, and I could not leave the place till late in the afternoon of Sunday."

"Sunday! Of course!" said Suffield. "That was all arranged.

The Daniel creature wanted to get away, and to make sure that you could not come and tell me, or any one else, that you had seen him until he had time to do something! Where can he have gone? Why didn't you let me know at once, my friend?"

"I thought, my dear sir," answered the alarmed philosopher, "that you were still in Lancashire. I wrote to your son as soon as I got back to my lodgings, and then I came here to-day, thinking that peradventure you might have heard and come back."

"You wrote to George! And he knows, then—if he's at home! That rascal Daniel must be found, you know! I must go to the police! You'd better come with me."

They went out together at once, took a cab, and drove to Scotland Yard. The detective-inspector, to whom they were introduced, saw clearly the importance of the matter.

"The thing's not patented, you see," said Suffield; "and if it is made public, or if it gets into another manufacturer's hands it means thousands of pounds loss to my business. So spend as you think necessary to find the black scoundrel."

"You do not know yet," asked the inspector, "if he has taken anything else?"

"I can't tell till I've seen my son, who has been managing the business. Where can the creature mean to go?"

"Back to his own country, probably," said the inspector. "But is it of any use his taking plans of machines there? He may have gone to the States, but Liverpool would have been better for that. Yet—haven't I heard that they are building cotton-mills in Bombay now?"

"They are," answered Suffield. "And, depend on it, that's where he's gone!"

"Very likely," said the inspector; "but we must look all round."

Suffield returned to Rutland Gate to eat his lunch with little appetite—and to tell his wife what had happened—to get a few things packed into a portmanteau, and to take the train for Lancashire.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"HE THAT *WILL* BE RICH!"

GEORGE SUFFIELD, the elder, arrived in Lancashire early in the evening, and drove home at once to Holdsworth Hall. His son, he found, was away—had been away, Tummas said, since ever "th' mester" had gone yesterday. He had left no word with Tummas where he had gone ("nay," grumbled Tummas, "Mester George doan't trust me wi' nought; he believes sae much i' th' black fellow!"), so that Mr. Suffield had no resource but to wait with what patience he could muster for his return, or for the morning.

He slept ill, and rose betimes, while it was yet dark, and went to the works. The air was already filled with the labored breathing of the engines and the whirl of bobbins and clatter of looms. It did him good to hear these sounds; it made him proud more than all the mumble and gossip, the speeches and the "Hear, hears!" of the House of Commons. He said to himself, "Ha, ha!" like the war-horse among the trumpets and the thunder of the regiments; he shook himself together, and longed to be in among the crowds of workers, with the monstrous music of the machinery in his ears.

"I shouldn't ha' listened to Joan!" he said to himself. "That I shouldn't!"

The old lodge-keeper stared a moment or two; speechless at sight of him; it was the first working-day after the Christmas holidays.

"If here bain't th' owd mester himsen! Aw'm right glad to see tha, mon!" exclaimed the lodge-keeper, as if he were himself the master, giving his hand to Suffield. "Ee! But it'll set th' folk up to see yo'!"

"Thank you, John, thank you," said Suffield, heartily shaking the hand of his old retainer. "I'm just come down on a special matter o' business. My son, I suppose, left no word if he would be here to-day?"

"Mester George? Not he! He left no word wi' me. But

how's tha able to leave th' business o' th' country—th' making o' laws and acts o' Parlyment, and'sech? How's things, mon? For we're as ignorant here as peas in a pod."

"Well, John," said Suffield, "th' queen has not axed me yet to be her prime-minister, nor made yo', John, a justice o' the peace." And so he walked on, while John closed the gate, laughing to himself.

"Th' owd mester!" he murmured. "He aye likes his joke. Nae much th' matter wi' a mon as can crock his joke."

The old master, spite of having heavy stuff on his mind, could not refrain from giving himself the pleasure of a walk through the work-rooms of the several buildings. It was agreeable to him (and it would have been instructive to a stranger) to see how all faces lighted up on beholding him, and how cheerily he was greeted by those whom he addressed—managers, foremen, or operatives; the abounding goodness of his nature touched them all.

"Who's in th' new building?" he asked of a manager at his elbow.

The manager answered that so-and-so was—a trustworthy person whom Suffield himself had left in charge.

"I'll go and have a look at it," said he.

Arrived in the new building, where the special printing machines were at work of the drawings for which Daniel Trichinopoly had made stolen copies, Suffield questioned the manager in charge: Where were the drawings kept? In the office, the man believed. Was that rule strictly carried out, that no one but those engaged in the building and sworn to secrecy should be admitted? It was. Had the manager ever seen Daniel Trichinopoly there? Never. Where were the keys kept? In the lodge with the other keys. Suffield made little account of the last two answers, for he remembered that a year ago, when no one was supposed to be in the building or to be able to get into the building, Ainsworth had declared he had seen Daniel there.

Thence he went to the counting-house. The book-keepers and penmen in general were not come yet; there were but that clerk who took the turn of early work, and an old woman dusting the desks. Suffield marched into the inner office and up-stairs into the sanctum that used to be his own. He knew where the plans of the new machines had been wont to be kept. He went to the safe, of which he as well as his son carried a key, opened a drawer; there were the plans. He took them out and unrolled them

on the table; he believed they looked dirtier, and they certainly bore marks of pencil-tracing. How could George have been so careless as allow the black Daniel opportunity to handle, and use them?

He put the plans away in the safe again, and then he sat down and thought. If the black Daniel had been able to play his own rig with these plans, what might he not have done with other things? George was palpably careless. There stood an account-book left out, and there in a drawer was a key. There might be nothing of consequence in the drawer; nevertheless— Mr. Suffield's business experience declared that a key neglected, for whatever reason, meant a weak link in security; and that a drawer left open was a temptation to open drawers. He went to the door and asked the clerk in the outer office, "Does Trichinopoly come much here?"

"He is mostly up at the Hall with Mr. George, and sometimes in the City," answered the clerk.

In the City office, of course, thought Suffield, helping with the export to India and the Straits. He was about to lock the safe up again, with the resolution to go through everything carefully with George when that young gentleman should appear, when he noticed the check-book of the firm lying before him—a volume which was to most check-books as a folio is to a duodecimo. He took it out and began to look at it. As he read one counterfoil, and another, and another, he occasionally raised his head with an amazed air, and then resumed his scrutiny with contracted brows.

"I don't understand this, my lad," he said at length. "There's more here than I bargained for. But I must wait."

So he resolutely closed the book, locked it up in the safe, and took his way to the Hall for breakfast. Tummas would gossip with "th' owd mester," but, for all that, breakfast was soon set upon the table. His solitary meal did not encourage cheerful reflection. Why, he asked himself, was he sitting there alone? Had he been weak in humoring his wife, and giving himself up to the pursuit of parliamentary honor? and had he been precipitate in handing the entire control of his business over to his son? He thought it somewhat hard, but he saw that even at fifty a man must buy his experience like the most reckless youngster.

After breakfast he sat awhile, and looked at the paper and looked at the clock. At length he rose, went into the hall, summoned Tummas to brush his hat and coat, and set off to walk to the sta-

tion, as aforetime, to take the train into town. Perhaps, he thought, his son would go to the City office first.

In the City office he found the manager and the clerks in their places, but no George. The manager, however, said that Mr. George, he believed, was in Liverpool on business, and would probably be back after lunch; so Suffield went forth into the City to see how the world of Lancashire commerce was moving. He had known nothing of that world, except from the newspapers and the gossip of his son, for a good many months. He went to the Athenæum and read the telegrams of news and of prices, and then he went on 'Change. He exchanged salutations and he listened, and the more he listened the more bewildered he became; he overheard whispers about cotton, which, he was certain, were hushed or changed into another venue as he approached. One old acquaintance was franker with him.

"Well, George," said he, "what's the game to-day? It's ages since we've seen you here. Is it 'futures' or 'spot'? There's not much, you know, in the way of 'futures.' They seem to be covered mostly by this rascal that's trying to 'corner'; but, between you and me, George, I believe there's more than a Parsee or two in that 'corner'; there's somebody behind them."

"There *is* a 'corner,' then, in cotton?" said Suffield.

"*Is* a 'corner'?" echoed the acquaintance. "But I forgot: you're only a Parliament man now. Well, there *is* a 'corner,' and there isn't a 'corner'; for it remains to be seen if it can stand the January business. No man, not even Morris Ranger, can keep the market in a corner forever. Speculation is a blessing, but not as some men speculate. This particular 'corner,' I believe, George, is going to become an open square. There'll be another big arrival this week, and then we'll see." And so the old acquaintance left him.

Suffield returned to the office, where he found his son busily hearing and speaking through the telephone. He nodded to his father, murmuring aside, "I heard you had been here, dad," and went on with his occupation. After a little while George hung up the telephone mouthpiece and sat down.

"And what," he asked, "has brought you down here, dad?"

"You haven't got McFie's letter, then?" said the elder. "Where, my lad, is your Daniel Trichinopoly?"

"Where?" echoed George; and the father saw the son turn paler than he had ever known him.

"Let me tell you, my lad, so far as I know," said Suffield; and recounted to his son the story of the philosopher, from the beginning to the end.

"Gone!—is he?" said George, gnawing his thumb, and evidently putting a constraint upon himself. "With copies of the plans? He certainly ought to have been here to-day, and he is not. The scoundrel! Wait a moment," said he, suddenly; "I'll make an inquiry."

He turned round to his writing-table and scribbled a note. He blew through a tube, and a clerk appeared. He handed the note sealed.

"Wait for an answer," said he; "and make as much haste as you can."

When the clerk was gone he explained his action to his father.

"You know," said he—"you remember I told you—that Daniel put that hundred Uncle Harry left him into the bank. He has been speculating with it, I believe, and made something more of it. If he is really gone he'll have taken that with him."

"Just so," said his father. "And it seems to me, George, my lad, that there must ha' been a deal of speculation going on inside the firm, for him to go against th' rule. When I was looking after the business myself I made it a rule, 'No betting on horse-races nor gambling in stocks here.' I'd seen too much harm come o' them, and I had made up my mind that no man that betted or speculated was fit to serve wi' me. I did not think, my lad, o' saying aught like that to you when I put you in charge, because I thought you had a proper, straight, clear business head on you."

"But, my dear dad," said George, "everybody speculates in these days; where's the harm in speculation?"

"The great harm in speculation, my lad," said his father, with something like sternness, "is that it makes you unfit for proper business. When I was a youngster I betted a sovereign on a horse; that sovereign became five; but what became of those five I never could tell; it was 'lightly come, lightly go.' And I said to myself, 'We'll ha' no more o' this!' But harm or no harm, the thing for you is that it must be either business or speculation; the man isn't born yet that can do both properly. If he tries to do it, he comes a cropper with either the one or the other. Hast thou been speculating?" he asked, plainly.

"Well—yes, father," answered George, much disquieted by the elder's direct question and uncompromising tone; "I have."

"Humph!" exclaimed his father. "I'm disappointed in tha, lad. Cotton, I suppose?"

"Yes, father; cotton."

"Much?"

"Well, that depends upon what you might think much."

"We'll go into that presently. I keep hearing about a 'corner' in cotton; dost tha know aught o' that?"

"Yes; I know something of it."

At that critical point the clerk returned and handed George a note.

"It is from the bank manager," said he, when he had opened it. "'*Mr. Trichinopoly himself withdrew his account on December 22d.*' That's more than a week ago! It's the day he went for his holiday!"

"Drew the money and went off to London at once, I suppose," said his father. "Now we'd better see that he hasn't drawn anything of ours."

But there were reasons why George did not wish check-books and accounts and such-like trifles to be gone into then; he therefore proposed to his father that the serious business of lunch should be entertained first, since nothing of any consequence could be done before the luncheon hour must strike. His father looked at his watch, considered that he was hungry, and not at all aware that the fate of his House might be involved in his decision, he said:

"Very well. Let it be lunch first."

George knew his father's good-nature and his affection for himself, and he set himself to interest and amuse him with other matters than those upon which they had trenched. His father had told him that he wished to get back to town that night, so that his mother might not be unduly anxious; and he was resolved that his father should go without seeing any books. He kept him as long as he could over lunch, and entertained him as richly as the elder would permit, and when he could keep him no longer he made a bold proposal.

"You'll only tire yourself out, dad, before your journey, if you go into these things. Why not let me go through everything by myself? One person can do a thing like that better than two."

"The second can check the first, my lad," said his father.

"But the first can check himself," said George, "by going over it a second time."

"Well, well, my lad," said Suffield. "Be it as thou wilt. But check thyself carefully and let me know th' result by to-night's post. And these speculations o' thine—let me ha' a statement o' them as soon as tha conveniently can this week."

Mr. Suffield was not so foolish as to be deceived by his son's concern for his comfort; he saw there was something the young man would rather keep from him at present, and, being a soft-hearted father, he was sorry for his son, and said to himself, "I won't be hard on th' lad. He's my only son, and if he has made a mistake he shall have the chance of putting it right before he explains." He had intended to return to London by the "dining" train, but, finding he could catch a train immediately, he went straightway to the station, while George returned to the office.

George set to work with energy to go through his accounts and to examine his private check-book (the only one to which, he thought, Daniel could have access), and tick off every check by the banker's pass-book. He wrote to his father that night that he could not discover that Daniel had stolen anything but the plans.

Still George was uneasy, and he went about with his brows wrapped in anxiety; for he knew that his speculations in cotton, though only of a kind which he himself would call "daring," would probably be characterized by his father as "reckless"—unless they were justified by their event; and their event was not yet; moreover, Gorgonio (with whom he had been the day before) was in low spirits, for prices were hanging at a very uninspiring level. But the first thing that seriously disturbed and shook him was the discovery that Tanderjee (to whom he had sent round an inquiry concerning Daniel) was "gone away on business"; his partner and compatriot could not say where? Where was the Parsee gone—and why? He could not help thinking that his absence and Daniel's disappearance were more than a coincidence. The second disturbing thing was a piece of news that shook him like the blast of doom; it came from Gorgonio, and Gorgonio had thought it of sufficient importance to send it by a special messenger. The steamer *Rohilla* had arrived in dock from Bombay with half that consignment of cotton on which Mr. Suffield had last given Tanderjee a substantial advance; and Gorgonio and this messenger of his had gone and examined the cotton together—bale after bale—and Gorgonio regretted much to say that the cotton was rubbish, and would not fetch twopence a pound! Would Mr. Suffield come and see it?

"Have you seen the cotton?" asked George of the messenger.

"Yes, sir," answered the clerk.

"And you agree with Mr. Gorgonio?"

"Quite, sir."

"And of course you have been in the habit of sampling cotton?"

"For years, sir."

"Then," said George, "I don't see why I should waste precious time at present in going to the Liverpool docks to look at it. Mr. Gorgonio can look after it; perhaps it will prove not to be all so bad when it is fully examined. Has Mr. Gorgonio," he asked, suddenly, "seen anything of Mr. Tanderjee lately?"

"I don't know, sir," answered the clerk.

"You don't know, then, that he has gone away nobody knows where?"

"Has he indeed, sir? That looks bad."

"Why does that look bad?" demanded George.

"Because this is the cotton just arrived that you favored him with an advance for, sir, and I heard Mr. Gorgonio say to-day that Mr. Tanderjee would make a good thing out of it."

"Then," said George, "your master suspects that Tanderjee may have gone away?"

"Very likely he does, sir."

The native activity and pugnacity of George's character were becoming thoroughly roused. To suspect was to be resolved. He blew through the tube by his writing-table, and a clerk appeared from the outer office.

"Are the December checks here or at Holdsworth?"

"Here, I think, sir," said the clerk.

He went to one of a set of drawers behind George and produced a bundle of used checks, which he handed to George. George undid the bundle and found that check for £7500 which he had given to Tanderjee; it was indorsed "for Jamsetjee and Mookerjee, Tanderjee." Then he took from a drawer near him his bank pass-book, and compared the date of the check with the date when it had been paid; the latter date was but one day later than the former. Then he turned to his clerk, who was awaiting his orders.

"Take this check," said he, "round to the bank, and ask the cashier to be so good as to let me know how it was paid."

While the clerk was gone on this errand he wrote a letter to Gorgonio, saying that he was convinced Tanderjee had wilfully committed a fraud upon him, and was evidently gone off with the

proceeds; but that he was determined to find him wherever he was, and that the cotton had better be sold for what it would fetch; if it was so bad it would not count in the market, and therefore might serve them by inducing a rise of prices; but he omitted all mention of Daniel's absence and offence. The letter finished, he gave it to Gorgonio's messenger and sent him off.

His own clerk returned from the bank with the cashier's answer to his demand. The check for £7500 had been paid to Mr. Tanderjee in fourteen Bank of England notes for £500 and £500 in gold. That was doubly suspicious. Why had he taken so large a sum in gold—and why had he not taken the usual means of transmitting part of the amount to Bombay, unless he had from the first intended to levant? The next thing to do was to discover whether these fourteen notes for £500 each had been changed, and, if possible, to trace them, and so—by good luck, perhaps—come at the whereabouts of the fraudulent Tanderjee. George looked at his watch; it was too late to ask the help of the bank that day.

But he turned to and went through his papers, and set his work all in order, as if in preparation for a long absence. Then he went home in a consuming fever of impatience and resentment, with plenty of time for reflection before him. Daniel, Tanderjee, and Gorgonio! Could it be that they had all been in league to deceive and defraud him? But no! He could not believe it of Gorgonio; his fortune was too much bound up with his own. But Daniel certainly had been hand in glove with Tanderjee, and it was probable they had gone off together. But how had Daniel managed to get at the plans to copy them? He went down to the counting-house when he had reached home, and made what examination he could. He saw (as his father had seen) clear evidence of tracing over the plans; but nothing more could he discover.

Next day he was astir betimes. Leaving orders for a portman-teau to be packed, and to be brought into town to meet a certain train, he entered the works while the early morning bell still rang. He went round carefully and saw that all occupations were making orderly progress, and then he took the chief manager aside and said a few words to him.

"I am going to leave you in absolute charge at present, Mr. Johnson. I dare say my father will come down to-morrow, or the next day. That black scoundrel Trichinopoly, and Tanderjee, the

Parsee merchant, have played the fool with me and bolted, and I am going to find them if I have to follow them to the other side of the world!"

"Hadn't you better leave that to the police, Mr. George?" said Mr. Johnson.

"I can't leave it all to the police; besides, the police are too slow. This is between ourselves. Good-bye, Johnson."

When he had eaten a scrap of breakfast he hurried into town and went directly to a telegraph office, where he wrote a message to Isabel, his affianced wife, requesting her to be at home as much as possible that day, because he *must* see her, though he could not say when. Thence he went to the bank, related his suspicion of Tanderjee, and begged them to make what inquiries they could concerning the cashing of the notes, and telegraph to him at his father's house in Rutland Gate, where he expected to be about three o'clock. He drew a hundred pounds in notes and gold, and then—after a flying visit to the office—he went to the railway station. In a minute or two he was embarked on his journey in a white heat of rage and resentment—rage and resentment against himself, as well as against others—which was scarcely to be distinguished from an intense calm.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THREE INTERVIEWS

GEORGE snatched a morsel of lunch at the bar of the refreshment room on his arrival at the London terminus, and then he drove to his father's at Rutland Gate. There had been a luncheon-party, and the guests were driving away as George drove up. It struck three o'clock as he entered his father's house with beating heart.

"What's up, my lad?" asked Suffield, meeting his son in the hall and glancing at the portmanteau being handed down from the roof of the cab.

"Come, father," said George, "and let us talk quick! Let these traps be left in the hall," he said to the wondering footman; "I don't expect to sleep here to-night."

His father led the way into the library, and turned, saying, "Well, my lad?"

"Let us sit down, father, together," said George, setting his hand-bag on the table and taking a seat. "I have discovered something that has made it necessary I should come to see you at once."

"Oh," said his father, "you have found something at last! I thought there should be something more than the plans for Daniel to run off with. But go on."

"I have to confess, father, that I have been speculating largely in cotton."

"Ha! You have?"

"I wanted to make our firm the biggest of its kind, and I wanted to make a good provision for the time when I might marry Bel."

"You did evil, my son, and expected good to come."

"I had read of a baker in France that developed an enormous business, because he determined not to deal with flour agents; he imported all the flour and grain he could use, and his business grew till he had a whole fleet of ships owned by himself at work

for him. 'Now,' I thought, 'that's what we should do! We ought to import all our own cotton.' I began small efforts in buying very early, though much did not happen till the beginning of the season in September. But as soon almost as I knew him, that Daniel had tempted me with his knowledge of Indian cotton, and led me on."

Suffield groaned.

"The black man," he murmured, "led me on! It's an excuse, lad, as old as Adam!"

"Am I trying to excuse myself?" said George. "I don't wish to, father. I am responsible and to blame. I only meant to show you how it all came about. Daniel was, indeed, very clever. He knew all the varieties of Indian cotton, and he had picked up with a Parsee who dealt in them. You remember Tanderjee?"

"Another black man!" groaned his father. "I wouldn't trust one o' them!"

"Tanderjee knew all about the shipments and the agents of Bombay, and between them Daniel and he made one or two very profitable movements. But they had very little money."

"Daniel, I suppose, would have had none at all if it hadn't been for Uncle Harry?"

"No. So Tanderjee came to me with a personal, first, that I should help him with money and share in the profits, afterwards that I should advance money on consignments at a reduced price to enable them to be shipped."

"I see it all! I see it all! It has been done before, my lad. A kind of confidence trick. They show you good samples, and get you to advance good money, and then they deliver rubbish! Go on, my lad."

"I advanced three-fourths once or twice. There seemed very little risk in that, you know, father. Indian cotton has for a good while shown a better average of quality than American, and it is so well packed that there is hardly any fear of damage or loss by fire or water."

"Go on."

"But the last time I dealt with him he asked me to give him a check, instead of making the common arrangement to be drawn upon."

"Confidence trick again!"

"Yesterday I was told that the first half of the consignment had arrived in dock," George doggedly continued, "and on

examination had proved not worth more than twopence a pound."

"What had you paid for it?"

"Fivepence."

"And for how much did you give him a check?"

"Seven thousand five hundred. Now I find Tanderjee has disappeared as well as Daniel."

"Oh, ho! He's gone, too, is he? Gone together are they?"

"I suspect so, and gone, I should think, to Bombay. Where else should they have gone with the designs for the patent machines?"

"I've been thinking," said his father, "they might have been taken straight to Germany for the machines to be manufactured at once and sent on to Bombay; but there's no doubt it's Bombay the whole business is meant for. But, now, my lad, I suppose you've come proposing to do something?"

"Find how they have gone and follow them! That's what I propose to do."

"Follow them yourself? Where's the good of that?"

"Not so much for the sake of the money Tanderjee has gone off with—though that's a good deal!—as because of the plans. As you have yourself said, father, they might take them to an engineer at once. However, I've been such a fool, I'm ready to defer to your opinion of what I should do. But I've something else I must tell you first. Father," continued George, with evident reluctance, "I'm engaged now in cotton transactions along with Gorgonio."

"What? In that cornering game of his that I've heard of?"

"Yes, father. He has no money; and I have become responsible for the payment of differences, and so on."

"You have? You scamp, George! You incorrigible scamp! To think that son o' mine should ever have a hand in the wickedest kind o' thing that's done in business!" He gazed at his son with an anger and sternness of demeanor the like of which his son had never seen before.

"Wickedest thing in business, father? How so?"

"Hast thought o' th' other men ruined when a 'corner' succeeds?—o' th' mills stopped, or put on half-time, wi' forcing up prices?"

"No, I hadn't thought of these things."

"Then," said his father, "it's time thou did, lad! Thou'dst better get out o' that 'corner' at once!"

"I can't, father, until the end of the month; the transactions are open till the 31st of January!"

"Get out at once, I tell tha!—and save thy character wi' all honest men!"

"But, just think what will happen! Prices will go down with a rush, and we shall lose over one hundred thousand pounds!"

"A hundred thousand! Good heavens! But I might ha' guessed a man cannot back a cotton 'corner' all by himself for less! But it must be done, lad, to save thy character and my own! I was an owd fool to trust tha wi' so much! But thou hast run thy rig, and now thou'dst better go thy ways! Thy mother and I'll ha' to go back to work and see what we can do!"

The father rose, stood with his back to the fire-place, and gazed with absent mind at the haughty lords of Padiham that glared on him from the opposite wall. The young man was thoroughly humbled. He beat his foot on the carpet, and his lip quivered.

"Don't speak to me like that, father!" said he. "I've made a tremendous mistake, but I meant no harm!"

"I believe they a' say that, lad! But go thy ways!"

"Here's a hundred pounds I drew to-day, father," said George, putting his purse on the table, "to go after those black men with; don't you want me to take that? Don't you want me to go?"

"Take it; take it. A little more or less don't matter. Take it, and do as tha likes wi' 't!—and go where tha likes!"

"Don't be so hard, father," said George. "Don't take my hope away! The bitterest thing to me is that if I don't save this, I'll have lost money that you and mother have worked hard to win! Bid me go for your sake, father! And don't burst the 'corner' up at once, father! It will cripple the business!"

"Thou'dst better leave thy 'corner' and thy Gorgonio to me, lad! And go and make what thou can o' thy black men!"

"I don't care for myself!" pleaded George. "I only want to show that I can do something—that I *am* fit to be trusted!" And the young man laid his face on his arm and sobbed.

"There, lad, there!" said his father, laying his hand on his son's shoulder and giving him an affectionate grip, while his lip trembled. "Let's say no more, but make what we can o't. What a' is said and done, thou'rt my own son, and my only one, and what's mine is thine! Come, lad, come! Let's shake honds!" And they shook hands, while the father said, "Thou'rt not a bad lad, but thou'rt a damn fool, George!"

At that moment Mrs. Suffield entered, and exclaimed to George, "What's all this? I suppose your mother is of no account in the house now."

"What dost think, Joan?" said Suffield. "Here's our George been trying to make a cotton corner!"

"Well, what if he has, my dear?" said his wife.

"Ah! What if he has? And what if he loses his character there, and all th' brass into the bargain?"

"No! Never!" exclaimed George's mother, kissing him. "He's not such a bad lad!"

"Father will tell you all about it, mother," said George, seriously. "I must run to see Isabel."

As he went out a telegram was handed to him. It was from his bankers. It declared that twelve of the notes whose numbers had been sent had been handed into the Bank of England and exchanged for a draft upon the Oriental Bank, Bombay, on December 27th, by a dark man who looked like a native of India.

"Daniel or Tanderjee," said George; and returned to put the telegram into his father's hands.

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Isabel sat waiting for him in a condition of great agitation. His morning telegram had assigned no reason for the hasty journey and the urgent request for an interview; so she wondered if by any means, occult or otherwise, he had learned or divined her desire to be free of her engagement to him. When he was announced she felt herself turn pale, and when he entered and pressed her hand she trembled so violently that George could not but note it.

"Are you ill, Bel?" he asked, with concern.

"No, George," she answered. "But your sudden descent upon me has startled me. Is there—is there," she asked, humbly (so humbly that George was surprised at the new tone in her), "any special reason for this sudden visit? You'll have some tea?"

She rose to ring the bell (and to release her hand from his).

"I must not stay, Bel. I have come to tell you something of great consequence, and then I must be off. I have been a great fool, Bel." (Isabel clasped her hands, and trembled afresh.) "I have speculated in cotton very seriously, and that black Daniel and another black man have gone off—to India, I believe—with money and with other things of such importance that if I don't recover

them—what with these and another mistake of mine—the firm will be crippled, if not ruined !”

“Oh, my poor George !” she cried. “Take my money—do ! And make things right with it !”

“My dear Bel !” he exclaimed, rising, “I couldn’t apply a penny of your money to mend the trouble I’ve made by my own folly !”

“Sit down, George dear,” said she, “and let us talk of this quietly.”

“There is no time for talk, my dear Bel !” said George. “My father will tell you all about it.”

“But won’t you take my money ?” said she, almost piteously. “The money was designed by Uncle Harry for the benefit of the family, I am sure, if the family ever needed it. He was always talking to me of our family coming first. You will take the money, won’t you ? I can write a check at once.”

“Bel, my dear, you are generosity—you are goodness itself ! but I will not touch a penny of your money ! I am going to succeed, or fail, by myself in this, Bel. I want to show my father that if I make a blunder I can try my best to repair it. And I am going to find those black villains, even if I should have to go to the other side of the world ! Do you know Ainsworth’s address, Bel ?”

“Mr. Ainsworth’s address ?” echoed Isabel, beset anew with an unaccountable alarm.

“I want to ask him about that letter he wrote to me—about the condition in which he saw Daniel. I was an ungrateful fool. I believe if I had paid attention to what he wrote me I should have been saved this trouble with Daniel ! Do you know, Bel, why I tore his letter up ? I was jealous of him, Bel !”

Isabel had heard him confess almost as much before, but not so explicitly. It struck her now as if she had heard it for the first time, such a strange feeling of guilt was hanging about her heart.

“No !” she said, scarce knowing what she said, and clasping her hands to restrain herself. “Surely not !”

“I was. Now give me his address if you know it, and let me go.”

Isabel wrote the address with trembling fingers, and handed it to him, saying : “It is the barest chance that you will find him in ; though he is as likely to be at home now as at any time. And then you are going to pursue those men ? I hope you will succeed in your quest, George !—I do, indeed !”

She could find nothing better—nothing more charged with feeling—than that to say; she could not belie herself. George looked tenderly on her, and took her hand.

"Let me kiss you once, Bel, before I go."

When he was gone she sat down in a passion of repugnance of herself, and wrote a few lines to Ainsworth:

"MY DEAR, MY DEAR,—George has been here. He is in great trouble. I could say nothing to him of what is in our minds. He asked me for your address. You have seen him, I hope. We had better not meet again till this is past. It is more than I can endure. I cannot humiliate myself in my own eyes. I love you—I love you, my dear; but I will not be base, and snatch the pleasure of seeing you, when that pleasure makes me ashamed. Oh, my dear, my dear, let me do what I think is right and honest, and help me to do it. EVER YOUR OWN."

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Alan Ainsworth sat in his old lodgings in Woburn Place when he was surprised to hear "Mr. Suffield" announced, and amazed to see George walk in.

"I have to apologize to you, Ainsworth," said George at once, "for intruding on you. But I am in trouble and in haste, and I want to ask you particularly about what you wrote to me last summer concerning that black rascal of mine, Daniel Trichinopoly."

"Oh, you have at last found he is a rascal, then?" said Ainsworth.

"If I had listened to you, Ainsworth, that day you said you saw him in the new mill, or even later when you wrote to me, I should have been spared the trouble. I behaved badly; I behaved like a cub; and I ask you to forgive me."

"My dear fellow," said Ainsworth, taking the proffered hand, "I have nothing to forgive—nothing!" He said that sincerely, but somewhat awkwardly, for he felt that on the whole George had much to forgive him. "In what way, may I ask, has his rascality developed?"

George told him the story of his own folly and of Daniel's guile as briefly as he could.

"And now, I see," said Ainsworth, "you want to trace him?"

"To follow and catch him, please God!" said George, fervently.

"Well, when I saw him," said Ainsworth, "he was just like one

of those lascar fellows that are sailors or stokers on the P. and O. steamers. Was he anything of a sailor, do you know?"

"I should say not a bit," answered George.

"And now I think of it," said Ainsworth, "it must have been stoking he was dreaming of in his opium-sleep. I remember perfectly—it made a great impression on me—the horror with which he talked of the fire—the fire and the water!"

"A lascar stoker on an Indian boat!" exclaimed George. "That's very likely. He'd think himself completely hid in that way beyond thought of detection. But there's no time to be lost," said he, rising.

Ainsworth insisted on accompanying him, and they went out together—Ainsworth longing to be frank and confess his love for Isabel, while he vainly felt how impossible it was to tell his companion such a thing then. They took a cab to Scotland Yard to find, or to hear of, the detective who had charge of Daniel's case. Scotland Yard had not yet discovered what had become of Daniel, and the two young men communicated their suspicion and its basis. The suspicion seemed, to the official mind, worth taking into account, and a detective was told off to accompany them to the dock office of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. There, after much difficult diving into the memory of the worried dock agent—for he was eaten up with business, that day being the sailing-day of the company—it was elicited that a lascar answering to Daniel's description, and bearing even Daniel's name, had sailed that very day at noon as a stoker in the *Travancore* in place of a defaulting lascar. Was the agent sure that was not a week ago? George asked. The agent was quite sure that none but return lascars sailed a week ago. A visit to the office of the company in Leadenhall Street added the strengthening fact that there had sailed as a second-class passenger for Bombay in the *Travancore* a Parsee giving the name of Mookerjee.

So much success at setting out cheered George beyond measure, and he was all agog to be off in pursuit—though how a successful pursuit was to be devised he did not know, since the first port of call for the *Travancore* was Gibraltar.

He had reckoned that if the fugitives had sailed (as they might have done) the week before, he might have caught them up by travelling overland by the mail-train to Brindisi.

"They have six hours start of us!" exclaimed George, looking at his watch.

The detective who had accompanied them from Scotland Yard proposed that an authoritative telegram should be at once sent to the shipping agent at Gibraltar demanding the detention of one Daniel, a stoker on board of the *Travancore*, and that the other detective who had taken charge of the case from the first should journey with George, with warrants for the arrest of Daniel Trichinopoly and Mr. Tanderjee. Then George bade good-bye to Ainsworth, and went on to Rutland Gate alone.

Arrived there, he found Lord Clitheroe waiting to accompany him on whatever quest he might be going, with a portmanteau ready packed.

"I happened to look in," said he, "and your father told me about this business—I," he hastened to explain in answer to a flush on George's face—"being almost one of the family. And so I made up my mind to go with you wherever you are going. It's not right for a man to go on a sport of that sort by himself."

"It's awfully good of you," said George, gratefully, "to think of coming." And he related all he had discovered.

"The P. and O. boat calls at Gibraltar on Tuesday, does it not?" said Clitheroe. "Rail at once to Marseilles, I would suggest, and then on by sea or by rail, as best we can. I think I can be of use to you on the route."

George had a word or two with his father alone (while Phemy took the opportunity of pressing Clitheroe's hand, and murmuring, "Aren't you a dear?"), and then—with a basket of provision which Mrs. Suffield insisted they should take because there was no time for dinner and her son had scarcely tasted food since morning—he and Lord Clitheroe drove away through Charing Cross, to take the 8.15 mail train, calling first at Scotland Yard for the detective who was to accompany them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SUFFIELD GOES INTO THE "CORNER"

ISABEL's opportunity had come: the crisis had arrived (which she had so vividly anticipated some weeks before) when her "family," who had rescued and nurtured her youth, needed the surrender of her wealth, if not of herself. Without hesitation she sat down and wrote a check for £50,000, payable "To George Suffield, Esq."—"my dear uncle," she had a mind to add, so that all the world might guess from this document how good he was. She knew enough of her own business to be aware that there was not nearly so much money as that lying to her credit at the bank; but she also knew that certain securities could be quickly realized on the morrow. She did not wish to encounter George again, so she waited until after dinner, and then she set out with her check for Rutland Gate.

She followed the footman into the library, where, he said, Mr. Suffield sat alone. She knocked, and a smothered voice said, "Come in." She entered. Her uncle was sitting up in his easy-chair, with a red bandanna over his head and an open book near him on the table.

"Trying to have an after-dinner nap?" said Isabel. "I am so sorry to have interrupted you, uncle! But I wanted to see you alone."

"No apologies, my dear," said he; "no apologies. I was just looking at that *Don Quixote* there—wonderful book that!—and those pictures of Doré's—wonderful imagination Doré had, and all that sort of thing; and I was reading where that rascal Sancho Panza says, 'Blessed be the man that invented sleep'—nobody invented it, of course, you know—'it wraps you about like a cloak!' And thinks I to myself, 'By jingo, now, if I don't try it!'"

"You dear old uncle!" said she. "And I interrupted your experiment!"

"It's of no consequence, my dear," said he, with a laugh at his own joke; "for I believe I've tried the experiment before. Sit

down, and tell me th' news. I can't give you long, because I must be off presently to catch the night train down to Lancashire."

"I believe, uncle," said she, "I've come on the same business as you must be going on."

"Sayst tha, lass?" said he, and a shade of unusual seriousness settled on his face.

"George has told me all about it," said Isabel, now somewhat shy about broaching her business; "and I want you to do me a great favor, uncle."

"What I can do, I will, my lass," answered her uncle, eying her.

"I want you to let me help you with the money Uncle Harry left me. I have brought a check with me; there is not so much as that at present in the bank, but I shall make it all right to-morrow. Take it, please, uncle!"

He took the check from her hand, and looked at it and looked at her.

"It's not the whole," said she, with a blush. "But some of the securities will take a little time to realize, won't they?"

"It's the biggest check I ever saw!" exclaimed her uncle, looking at it again.

"And you will take it and use it, uncle, as a—a as a present from me?"

She was doubtful of his look: it did not seem to her that of an acceptor of a present.

"I'll take it, my lass—"

"Oh, thank you, uncle!" she exclaimed.

"I'll take it, my lass, but I'll not use it. But I'll frame it with a gold frame, and I'll hang it up and keep it as the biggest and the kindest check I ever saw!"

"Don't, uncle," said she, with a deep blush of confusion and disappointment—"don't treat me as a child—as if I don't understand what I am doing!"

"Thou'rt nobbut a child to me, Bel, my dear," said her uncle, rising, with tears in his eyes and patting her cheek as he had been wont when she was a little girl. "Thou'lt always be to me the bit of a lonely lass that gave me her hand in this London twenty years ago and came away wi' me to Lancashire, and that has been a daughter to me ever since. I understand, my lass, why thou'st done this! I thank tha, my dear!" He took her hand and pressed it. "But it canna be! Can a father take his lass's bit of

brass because she's generous enough to hand it over to him, and because he has been an owd fool?"

At that Isabel was touched enough to shed tears, and foolish enough to have not a word to say.

The footman entered and addressed Mr. Suffield.

"The keb's at the door, sir," said he, and withdrew.

"Well, Bel, my dear," said Suffield, "I must go. But first—in case of mishap—" He sat down and took pen and ink and wrote across the back of Isabel's check, "Cancelled by Geo. Suffield," folded it, and put it in his pocket-book. "Now, lass," said he, rising again, "kiss thy uncle, and say good-bye."

Isabel kissed her uncle affectionately, saying, "But I haven't done with you yet. It remains to be seen whether you are to have your way, uncle, or I mine."

Her aunt entered to see that Suffield was properly wrapped up for his journey, and to beg that she might hear every day how matters went. Isabel and she stood on the steps to see the excellent man enter the cab and drive away through the winter night to remedy or control the evils wrought by the self-confidence and rash ambition of his son.

Suffield went down to Lancashire strong in the main resolves to clear the name of his house from the offence and iniquity of "cornering," and to purge his business of such irregularities as had crept into it during his son's reign. It was not yet quite evident to himself into what details of action these resolves would lead him; for, though in the first flush of his indignation he had been ready to make an immediate sweep of the "corner" (so far as George was concerned in it), he now saw, being calm and having considered, that, while ruin might be brought on himself by haste, no harm need be wrought on others by delay and temporizing. He would like to "unload" himself of the Gorgonian responsibilities—for his son's responsibilities were his—without gain to himself and without loss to others; he feared it was impossible to "unload" at all without some loss to himself, but he hoped that by management the loss might be kept small.

When he showed himself at the works in the early morning all were delighted to see him, but all wondered what had "come to Mester George" that "th' owd mester" was there alone. Late in the day the effect was similar in the City—in his own office, in the streets, and on 'Change.

"Hello, Georgie!" was the greeting of old acquaintances. "What's brought tha here again?"

"Business, my lad, business," was his answer. "Matter o' business to be seen to. But tha knows th' saying: 'A wise head keeps a close tongue.'"

Next morning he received a telegram from George, from Marseilles:

"Both train and steamer no go. Going on by steam-yacht. See Gorgonio."

"Hired the yacht, I expect," said Suffield to himself. "That's more expense to little purpose! And now, I suppose, in any case, I'd better see that Gorgonio creature about this cornering."

But the day was Saturday, when business closed early. Suffield, therefore, resolved to leave Gorgonio alone till Monday morning. He sat down and wrote to him that he wished to see him on very important business if he would be so good as to be at liberty to listen to him at an early hour on Monday. But his wish was gratified sooner than he anticipated. He was just thinking of locking his writing-table and going home to Holdsworth, when Mr. Gorgonio was announced.

"Show him in," said Suffield, and twisted round in his chair to receive him on the defensive.

Gorgonio entered with smiles and bows, and a general profuseness of affability and politeness. He had, he said, expected to meet Mr. Suffiel' the younger; he presumed he was addressing the father of Mr. Suffiel' the younger?

"Yea," said Suffield; "I'm responsible for him, both as his father and as head of the firm." And he gave Gorgonio a pointed look to emphasize his statement.

"I am please, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, politely, "to make your agreeable acquaintance."

"I'm sorry to say, sir," replied Suffield, "that I can't return the compliment."

Gorgonio looked a little put out by that reply, and perceiving that Mr. Suffield was not only not prepossessed in his favor, but absolutely prejudiced against him, his amiability sank into a more insinuating and watchful quality.

"I came over," said he, "to fill an engagement to lunch with your son, but I suppose he have forgot."

"I suppose he did," said Suffield; "and you see he's not here to-day. Still, if you like to lunch with me—"

"Thank you, Mr. Suffiel'; but I cannot impose upon your politeness."

"Just as you please, sir. But what," continued Suffield, "is this precious cotton business you and my son are concerned in?"

"You must excuse me, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, "but I cannot speak of your son's private business."

"Private business be hanged, sir!" said Suffield. "It's not so peculiar and private to my son but that, so far as I understand yet, my money's pledged in it! What's the game?"

"You must excuse me, Mr. Suffiel'," persisted Gorgonio. "But at least I cannot tell you without your son's authority."

"Very well. If you refuse to enlighten me fully about this business, I must refuse to be accountable at all for my son's engagements."

"We had better wait, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, "till your son can be present."

"My son, sir, cannot be present for two or three weeks—"

"Two or three weeks?—*weeks*?"

"He has gone away on a voyage—for the good of his own health and mine, sir, and I cannot say when you will have an opportunity of seeing him."

"It is very bad weather for voyage," remarked Gorgonio, now gray-skinned and sharp-eyed with alarm and suspicion.

"My son's an Englishman, sir," said Suffield; "and he prefers a voyage in bad weather, with the sea as rough as the wind can make it. But that's neither here nor there. Are you going to explain to me the position of things, or are you not?"

"I am to speak to you, Mr. Suffiel'," said Gorgonio, "as if you were your son; is that so?"

"That is so. Now fire away."

"Well, Mr. Suffiel', the second part of that consignment from Bombay what you did give Mr. Tanderjee a three-fourths advance for is come into dock; I have seen it this morning, and it is not—any more than the other—worth twopence a pound!"

"I'll see that cotton on Monday morning myself," said Suffield, taking out his tablets and making a note. "Go on."

Gorgonio stared in surprise: obviously this was not the same man as Mr. Suffield the younger.

"I have bought for us," continued Gorgonio, "in the last two days ten thousand more bales for January delivery."

"At what price?"

"At six and five-eighths."

"And what is the 'spot' price?" *

"'Spot,' Mr. Suffiel', is six and eleven-sixteenths; so, you see, we do very well."

"Now," said Suffield, "we come to the business I wanted to talk to you about; I had written to you to make an engagement for that purpose. You'll oblige me, sir, by buying no more; about the getting rid of what we have I can't speak till I know the whole situation."

"Getting rid, Mr. Suffiel'! Unloading, Mr. Suffiel'! Oh, my great Heaven!—do you know what you're saying, Mr. Suffiel'? The business is going just beautiful! Prices is steady! Nobody is afraid! Nobody believes nothing is going to happen. We hold two hundred thousand bales at this moment against a stock of a little over seventy thousand!—and nobody guesses it! Get rid, Mr. Suffiel'? Bust up the loveliest 'corner' as ever was!—and lose your chance of more than one hundred thousand pounds profit! Oh, surely, no, Mr. Suffiel'! You are joking!"

"I've never knowingly made money dishonestly," said Suffield, with unusual sternness, "and I and mine are not going to begin now! If I made the profit you name out of this cornering business I'd do it only by ruining or crippling scores o' men! I won't do it! And if I could I'd shake the whole business off my hands this minute! But my son engaged to back you with money in this, and I'm responsible for my son. He gave you his word—"

"He gave me his bond!" exclaimed Gorgonio. "I have it on paper! It is in black and white!"

"His word would ha' been binding enough," said Suffield, quietly. "He gave you his word, and I must be bound by it. But since I—that is, my son—engaged to find the necessary money, I must have a voice in the business—and a final voice. And I say I want to have done wi' 't as soon as possible; you'll do no cornering wi' my help. Clear it out—and the sooner the better. Only, at the same time as I don't want to see anybody else lose, I don't want to lose myself if I can help it."

"You are bound to lose, Mr. Suffiel'!" said Gorgonio, desperately. "Bound! When the 'bears' find you selling—and you can't sell two hundred thousand bales in a hurry without being found out—down they'll send the prices!"

* "Spot" price means the price for delivery at once, or on the "spot."

"Well," said Suffield, with a grim tightening of his mouth, "all I can say is, let us lose as little as possible. You seem to have known how to buy without raising suspicions; you should be able to sell."

"And what, Mr. Suffiel', is to become of my profit?"

"You'll have your broker's commission from me; won't that do?" said Suffield.

"That is very little!—for all the time, all the brain, all the skill and knowledge I have spent on this business! Ah, this beautiful 'corner'!—to be spoil!"

"I'll do this much more," said Suffield: "if you can get off these bales at contract prices—at the prices you took them up at—you shall have double commission; and that, sir, is, in my opinion, more than twice as much as you deserve. A man that plans and makes a 'corner' should be sent to hard labor and fed on skilly, just as much as a man that steals his neighbor's purse. Good-morning, sir. I'll call on you on Monday, when, maybe, you'll see your way a bit better."

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN THE "CORNER"

THE interval till Monday Suffield spent in peace. He did not think it was worth his while to waste his strength in travelling to London and back in that brief time, even to have the pleasure of seeing and taking counsel with his wife. On Sunday he went to church, and then in and out among his own people, cheering the young, and gossiping with and comforting the aged; he understood his own folk and their rudely affectionate ways better than he did those of the south country.

On Monday his anxiety and trouble began which were to last till the month ended. He was the simple-minded, honest kind of man (as I have elsewhere remarked) who, when once he suspects, entertains an uncompromising distrust. He disliked and suspected Gorgonio, and therefore he believed it was impossible for Gorgonio, of his own motion, to deal honestly in any business. When he found, on visiting the Indian cotton in dock, that Gorgonio had spoken truth when he had said it was worth no more than twopence a pound, he merely thought it was one of those cases which frequently occur, when the habitual liar has not told a lie only because it was not worth his while, and he distrusted Gorgonio the more for his having told the truth on one occasion. When Gorgonio asked what should be done with the cotton—should it be warehoused and sold by parcels?—Suffield suspected him of some ulterior purpose (he would have found it difficult to say what) in making the suggestion.

"No," said he. "Sell the rubbish off at once. It's worth no more than twopence, and if we can get twopence for it, let us be thankful."

But they did not get twopence for it. Twopence was very cheerfully given at first, but when still more was offered, and more pressed upon the market "without reserve," buyers (a suspicious folk) began to think the cotton must really be worse than the samples indicated; so they refused to give twopence; and before

the lot was cleared out a penny was reached. And Gorgonio laughed to himself (for he had secretly bought in a considerable quantity of it at a penny) and exclaimed, "This is beautiful way to do business! The Suffiel' *père* is old fool!"

But Suffield was no fool; he was only consumed by dislike of the whole business and distrust of Gorgonio. It worried and wore him beyond measure that the "unloading" of "corner" responsibilities must be intrusted to Gorgonio. It chafed him so much when he sat in his office that he had to get up and take the train to Liverpool, "to see how the Asiatic scamp was getting on." He would even hang about among the busy crowd on the Liverpool flags (a very notable and half-forlorn-seeming figure) with a kind of watchful eye on Gorgonio; and in the troubled watches of the night he dreamed horribly of Gorgonio (who more and more looked as if he had been buried in some noisome place, and after some time had been dug up again), of his hideous pendulous, pitted nose, and his active pig's eyes.

And Gorgonio felt he was disliked and distrusted, and saw he was under such surveillance as the simple Suffield could bring to bear. Under no circumstances was Gorgonio a sweet-tempered and forgiving creature; but under these he became vindictive and reckless—reckless of his backer's interests, and reckless even in a measure of his own. By the following Monday, when prices were "struck" for the week, not more than 20,000 of the 200,000 bales of contracts had been got rid of; and prices had gone down, so that "difference" would have to be paid on 180,000 bales! On Tuesday afternoon Gorgonio came to Suffield and set before him with an ill-disguised satisfaction the reckoning which would have to be met on Thursday, the "settling day." Mr. Suffiel' must, make out a check (to be paid into the cotton bank) for a considerable number of thousands!

"This must come to an end!" said Suffield, when he had made out the check. "This repeated much would ruin any man!"

"How can any man make it end, Mr. Suffiel'?" said Gorgonio. "The more you sell out, the more will the prices go down, down! It cannot help itself!"

So the days passed, and George did not return; and with waiting and worry his father began to look worn and aged; his hair turned grayer, and his cheek lost its wholesome ruddiness. It added immensely to his trouble that under George's rule the interests of the Suffield business had been sacrificed to the demands

of this extraneous speculation, and that proper business payments had been half-met or postponed to permit of money being diverted to cotton transactions.

It was impossible that the change passing upon Suffield and the load of anxiety he bore (he was of those to whom concealment was wellnigh impossible) should not be observed in so well-known and remarkable a figure as his. Speculation as to reasons became common. Where was his son—shipped off because he had run the rig pretty freely? And why did he so frequently journey to Liverpool, and appear (as was said) on *The Flags*? Men discussed these points as they saw him on 'Change, as they sat at lunch over against him, and when he passed them in the streets. Whispers went round, and doubts began to gather. Was the House of Suffield becoming shaky? Was he there to stave off reverses brought upon the House by the ignorance and carelessness of his son? A foolish thing that was he had done—in putting his son in complete charge of the business, and going off himself to London, to swell about (oh yes, everybody knew his wife was an ambitious woman!) among London nobs in Parliament and society! Suffield was a "very good sort," but he would come to grief yet, through his own good-nature and his wife's ambition! Suffield saw these things in the looks and heard them in the tones of men, and understood only too well how they might help to bring a more untoward end about. And yet he could do nothing but wait and endure till the end came, putting his shaky trust in "that rascal Gorgonio."

A diversion came at the end of the week. Telegrams were published in all the newspapers (in the Liverpool papers in large type), proclaiming that there had been a great fire on the quays of Savannah, in which some warehouses filled with cotton ready for shipment had been completely destroyed. The extent of the loss was not known, but the immediate result in Liverpool was the raising of the prices of cotton. Thereupon he wrote at once to Gorgonio: "Seize this favorable opportunity to sell out as much as ever you can;" and then he was ashamed that he should be pleased to take advantage of a disaster which perhaps meant ruin to some.

Early next week (which was the third of the crisis) he was surprised and troubled by an anonymous letter from Liverpool. It was signed "One who knows," and it advised Mr. Suffield to put no trust in Gorgonio, who was playing him false; he was working

"both on the bull and on the bear tack;" it was to his interest to sell little at present, and then to send down prices with a rush at the end of the month in the endeavor to clear out. That troubled Suffield very much; for must it not have been written by some one in Gorgonio's confidence or in Gorgonio's office? who else should know that Suffield had such dealings with Gorgonio? Suffield went to Liverpool to see Gorgonio, and found that part, at least, of the anonymous communication was true; for Gorgonio had sold comparatively little in spite of Suffield's urgent instruction after the news of the fire in Savannah. Then Suffield was very wroth.

"You are not keeping faith with me, Mr. Gorgonio," said he. "I agreed to carry out my son's compact about money, and you on that understanding agreed on your part to work off these responsibilities as quickly as possible."

"And, Mr. Suffiel, I do work them off as quickly as possible!"

"What, you villain!" exclaimed Suffield. "And this last time with everything in your favor you have sold something less than ten thousand, notwithstanding my express instructions to get rid of as many as possible!"

"What would you have, Mr. Suffiel?" cried Gorgonio, with a snarling reasonableness. "First you say, 'Do not sell at low price!' Then you say, 'Sell as many as possible!' But if I sell many as possible I must sell at low price, because price go down under great many. Well, what? Which? I cannot please you both way! I am not two person—twice, double! I am not what you call ambidextrous! I am not amphibious! I am not hermaphroditus! No! Try to sell both way yourself, Mr. Suffiel! I am willing!"

What, then, could Suffield say or do? What could he do but fume within himself and fret because he was certain this man was playing him false, though he could not refute his plausible arguments? And the worst of it was—the most galling and intolerable thing—that he must still continue tied to this man till the end of the business.

It was at that time it first became evident to Suffield that the business world in which he lived and moved was aware of his cotton entanglements. As matter of fact the shrewd Lancashire men, whose care it was to be "up to" all the moves of the complex commercial game, had for some time truly guessed what was the nature of the unworthy connection of the Suffield House with a

man like Gorgonio. The disappearance, moreover, of Tanderjee (who it was known had had business relations with the younger Suffield), and of Daniel Trichinopoly (who had been his creature), and then of George himself, could not, and did not, fail to be remarked and interpreted. In one way and another a tolerably accurate knowledge of the situation was common property, inasmuch that, while the older and more staid men refused to believe that a man of Suffield's commercial probity and honor would encourage so speculative and disreputable a thing as a "corner," many of the younger and more light-minded (who knew not Suffield) believed he was still trying to hold the "corner" for his absent son, and betted on "the old man's" power to hold out.

Under these disquieting circumstances it is not surprising that creditors of the house of Suffield—men who commonly would have never thought of pressing for payment—urged their accounts upon the attention of Mr. Suffield, who bravely met their demands and wrote them checks, till his account at the bank began to run to fewer figures than it had been wont. And still he sought assistance or advice of no one, but sat alone in his sturdy and cheery stoicism. One morning (and this was the first event that absolutely convinced him his world was in possession of his secret) Mr. Poynting was announced. Mr. Poynting was the head of a firm of engineers who had for many years made all the Suffield machinery, and to whom a large bill had fallen due. Had Mr. Poynting called about that bill? The heart of Mr. Suffield sank.

"Don't be frightened of me, Suffield," said Mr. Poynting. "I'm not intruding on you as a creditor; I'm come to see you as an old friend. To come to the point at once—you'll forgive me if I'm wrong—you are, or may be soon, pressed for money. Will ten thousand pounds for a year, or a couple of years, be of any use to you? If it will be of any use you can have it, and welcome, my friend."

Suffield was so moved by that generous and spontaneous offer of aid that he could not speak for a moment.

"Thou'rt good, Poynting!" said he. "Very good! I thank tha heartily, but I mun fend for mysen! Had it been a disaster o' Providence that brought me to this I mowt ha' said different, but I ha' brought it on mysen and I mun wrastle through it by mysen; thank yo' all the same, Poynting."

"I ha' understood," said Mr. Poynting, "that it was your son backed up this attempt at a 'corner,' unbeknown to you?"

"Oh, they say that, do they? My poor lad! There's not many to say a good word for him now, I dare say; though, I reckon, they were all 'Hail fellow' wi' him when he was about. Yes; the foolish lad thought he was going to do a great stroke. 'He that maketh haste to be rich,' " he continued, exercising his agreeable faculty for incorrect quotation, "'falleth into speculation and a snare!' Th' owd way's best! I don't hold wi' these new-fangled dodges for making money. There's no real work nor wealth in them. But th' lad's away trying hard to clear off a bit of his mistake, and I'm bound to see him out of it—though it's a more serious job than I thought it would be."

"I don't hold wi' speculation myself," said Mr. Poynting, "and corners in anything are, I think, damnable. But isn't it a pity, Suffield, to let all his cotton go, as they tell me it's going, at poor rates? Take the ten thousand, if it's any help to you, and hold on to the last day for a rise, and then you'll be out of it with a pound or two in your pocket."

"Thank yo' again, Poynting; but the cotton mun go. And I'd far rather I lost than other folk. I'll not ha' it said about me that I made a penny out of so damnable and detestable a thing as a 'corner'! My only concern now is to save th' business; and I think I can save it—though I may ha' to go and live in a cottage again."

"Well, Suffield," said Poynting, with resignation, "you know th' saying, 'There's naught so queer as folk.' A wilful man mun ha' his way. But if you should th'nk better o' 't, let me know."

"Thank yo' again, friend," said Suffield. "I'll not forget; I'll remember it a' my days!"

And he wrung his friend's hand as he went away.

A little later he was surprised by a visit from a bank official. The official desired to communicate a very delicate and peculiar matter of business.

"You may know, or remember," said he, "that we were asked by Mr. Suffield, junior, to trace fourteen Bank of England notes for five hundred pounds."

"I remember," said Suffield. "You telegraphed to my son in London about twelve of them."

"We have now," said the official, "traced another—traced it to a person in Liverpool named Gorgonio, with whom, I believe, you have dealings, Mr. Suffield, and who certainly had dealings with Mr. Suffield, junior, and the original holder of the note."

"You mean Tanderjee? I was convinced that Gorgonio was a scoundrel."

"Precisely. Of course that person may have received it from Tanderjee in the ordinary way of business, or he may not. It would be difficult, we think, Mr. Suffield, to show that he did not; but we thought you would like to know the fact."

Yes; Mr. Suffield saw it would be difficult to show there was anything improper in Gorgonio's possession of a £500 note which had passed from the hand of Tanderjee.

"I hope, Mr. Suffield," said the official, "that this cotton business of Mr. Suffield, junior, goes well now?"

"Thank you," said Suffield; "but it won't go well till it's gone altogether."

CHAPTER XL

OUT OF THE "CORNER"

WHILE Suffield pondered during the next day or two how it could be brought home to Gorgonio that the £500 note which he had received from Tanderjee was his share of the Tanderjee cotton fraud (which Suffield did not for a moment doubt), a letter was on its way to him from Marseilles from his son concerning this very matter. George was returning home with both criminals; but they were all so worn with fatigue that they could not set out so soon, or travel with such speed as the letter, which was mainly written to advise the arrest of Gorgonio, if possible. Tanderjee had denounced him as a participator, not only in the cotton fraud, but also in the theft of the plans.

With that letter in his pocket he went to Liverpool to call on Gorgonio. It was only three days to the 31st of January, when all the cotton transactions in which Gorgonio and his son were involved must close, and when the final reckoning must be made up according to the prices with which the month would close. He was therefore determined to make a final effort, by means of a threat, to encourage Gorgonio to get rid of most of the cotton promises at a tolerable price before the final, fatal day. When Suffield entered Gorgonio's office the latter merely sat back in his chair and waited; their relations were too strained for the exchange of civilities.

"More than a month ago, Mr. Gorgonio," said Suffield, taking a seat, "you received from Mr. Tanderjee one of several notes for five hundred pounds, the which he had received from the bank in payment of a check which my son gave him; would you mind telling me again why Tanderjee gave you that note?"

Gorgonio looked at his claws a moment and then at Suffield.

"Yes," said he, "I remember. Tanderjee gave it to me in way of business—yes; in payment of matter of business between myself and Tanderjee."

"Will you swear, if required, that the matter of business for

which Tanderjee paid was not the help you had given in his cotton fraud, and in another matter concerning my affairs which I will not name at present?"

"Who say that, Mr. Suffiel'?" exclaimed Gorgonio, turning a very evil color. "Who, Mr. Suffiel', have the impudence to say such thing?"

"Tanderjee has," answered Suffield, calmly.

"Tanderjee?" Gorgonio looked about him in perplexity. "When can Tanderjee have say that? Tanderjee is gone!"

"But he will come again!" said Suffield. "He is on the way back now, under the charge of my son and a detective."

"Ah, that then is the reason," exclaimed Gorgonio, in a burst of enlightenment, "why Mr. Suffiel', younger, go way on voyage! That is so!"

"Well, then, Mr. Gorgonio, is Tanderjee a liar, or has he told the truth?"

"Tanderjee is liar, certainly! I will tell him he is liar to the face, when he come!"

"Will you be prepared, when Tanderjee and the other man stand their trial, to clear your character and give the details of the business for which Tanderjee paid you five hundred pounds?"

"I will, Mr. Suffiel'! 'Pon my sacred word of honor, I will!"

"Mr. Gorgonio," Suffield broke forth at length, "I believe you to be a creature without honor or honesty—to be a liar and a thief! It would do me good to be able to kick you into the street, and down the street, and into the Mersey, and so out of England, which creatures like you pollute wi' your presence! But I can't afford to do that. It is my deplorable lot at present to be tied to you, sink or swim! You would be glad if I sank, I know; but, please Providence! I don't mean to sink if I can make use of a reptile like you! You've done badly for me in this cotton business for your own ends, as I believe, though, God help me! I can't prove it! But now I give you one chance to do better! There are three days left! If by the end of that time you haven't unloaded at a fair price at least three-fourths of these responsibilities that still remain—I can't in reason ask you to do more than that in the time, but you know how to manage it—"

"I cannot—no man can—do that! I have say again and again, Mr. Suffiel', that you cannot unload much and not send down the price! And it is not possible to unload so much as you say in three days at any price!"

"Then," said Suffield, "I shall have you arrested, to stand your trial with the two others. If you accomplish what I ask, I shall say no more about this. That is my last word!"

Suffield rose to go; and there was about Gorgonio, as he leaned over the table and with a snarl on his lip glared at the big Englishman over his hunched shoulder, something of the ugly, obscene suggestion of the hyena at bay in his cage, some hint of the brute's evil temper, evil color, and bristling back.

"I will try to accomplish what you say. It is difficulty, but I will do it!"

"Very well," said Suffield, and went.

It was a desperate task that Gorgonio had promised, under compulsion, to perform—so desperate that he would seem to have soon determined to abandon it. For the past fortnight he had really sold much less than he had reported to Suffield that he had sold, holding on with the gambler's hope of emerging on the last day of the month in possession of a considerable "corner," and so of forcing up prices and reaping his profit in spite of Suffield, even if he also made (as he would make) a profit for Suffield, too. But when the sturdy Suffield presented his ultimatum he had a horrible vision of final ruin, of trial in a terrible English court where a man cannot bribe, of imprisonment in an English jail whence it is difficult for a man to escape; then panic seized him—as in an unforeseen emergency it often does seize the craftiest, coolest man, and the most savage and courageous brute—his nerve went, and he could think of nothing but flight.

In the afternoon of the day before the last Suffield received a telegram signed "Gorgonio," and demanding an immediate interview. Suffield went; but when he arrived at Gorgonio's office he found no Gorgonio. He was received by the confidential clerk of Gorgonio, who said that his master had not been in town all day nor had sent any explanatory word; that he (the clerk) had first telegraphed to his home in the suburbs, and had then gone to it; the house was shut up, and no news of Gorgonio was to be had. The only possible conclusion was that Gorgonio had fled.

"And," said Suffield, "if I have driven him out of Lancashire, and perhaps out of England, I shall reckon I ha' deserved well o' my country. But he must ha' gone because this business is in a bad way. You're an Englishman, I hope, my lad?"

"I'm a Welshman, Mr. Suffield," said the young man, with a smile.

"That's the same thing, my lad. I can trust tha. Tha knows all Gorgonio's business, I suppose? Well, then, show me all this business, and help me to decide what's to be done, and thou shan't lose by it."

So they sat down together and went through the records of all the transactions; and it became evident to Suffield that comparatively little had been sold—that more than 100,000 bales of contracts still remained.

"Why, Mr. Suffield," said the young man, "you command the market yet! If you don't sell to-morrow—if you decide to hold the 'corner'—prices will go up, and you will make a big haul!"

For one hesitating moment a vision danced before Suffield of a profit instead of a loss; his apparently prosperous position maintained and established instead of shrunk into something like poverty, his daughter's distinguished marriage coming to fruition instead of being, perhaps, blighted, and his wife's innocent ambitions fulfilled instead of thrust into the *limbo* of first loves, broken promises, and wasted efforts. The dream lasted but a moment; the next he had recovered himself.

"No," said he, "I'll sell out! I'd rather lose half my capital than ha' it said of me I ever made a penny by cornering! Sell out, my lad; sell carefully and craftily, so as not to scare the prices, but sell!"

He decided after a little hesitation that there would be no advantage in his remaining in Liverpool for the last day, especially since he desired that he should not be openly identified with this business; and he left the confidential young man with the assurance that he trusted him, and the encouragement to do his best.

The record of the last day is common property: was it not written and published in all the newspapers of the principality under the heading, "Final Collapse of the Corner"? Thus the leading Liverpool daily wrote of it: "On the last day the opening quotation of the market was 6.15, and for the first hour it ran down and up with remarkable uncertainty till 6.10 was reached. It then became evident that many 'bulls' had been rocking on the back of the leading operator in the hope that he would help the market at the close. It was remarked as strange that the leading operator, Gorgonio, had not been seen, but it was rumored that he had been quietly selling through another. The rumor spread, and then others scrambled to get out; and the prices fell down, down, till 5.16 was reached as twelve o'clock struck."

All the while Suffield was in telegraphic communication with Liverpool. Messages came regularly, marking, as it were, the quarters of each hour, and chronicling in the most unfeeling way the fluctuation, and then the steady declension, of the prices; and at the same time a clerk was kept passing to and fro between the office and the Exchange to check the telegrams by the prices registered there. Thus the quarters passed rapidly away until half-past eleven. At that hour Suffield left the office and went on 'Change to "see the last of it," as he said to himself. He walked up the noble crowded hall, and as he passed to his usual station the hubbub was hushed and all eyes were turned on him, to observe how he was taking it. The anxiety of the past month had wrought a greater change on him than he was aware; the careless, boyish ruddiness of his cheek was gone, and his hair had become almost white. He was there to show that the worst would not break him, that he still meant to hold his head up among his fellows, and if there was any man on 'Change had aught against him he was ready to listen to his demand; and there was more than one creditor there who had meant to descend upon him, but who, seeing him, held his hand; they were proud now to have so much personal interest in him as to have him in their debt.

About ten minutes to noon his clerk brought him a telegram reporting that the price was 5.16, and that there still remained so many bales.

"Thank God!" said he. "It might be worse!"

He lingered a few minutes longer, chatting to old acquaintances about other things than cotton, and then when the hour struck which closed the business of the last day of the month on the Liverpool Cotton Exchange, he left his place and walked out. He had sacrificed the 'corner,' but he had saved his business; and they all guessed it! The throng, as if involuntarily, made an avenue for him and took off their hats as he passed—an action to which he responded by taking off his own—and as he went out at the wide portal a ringing cheer broke forth.

"Bravo, George!"

Suffield's heart was stirred within him, and reinvigorated.

"I'm turned fifty," he said to himself, "but I'll make my business again! And now I'll sleep to-night!"

CHAPTER XLI

IN THE BOSOM OF THE FAMILY

EARLY that morning Mr. Suffield had received a brief telegram from his wife: "*George back. Broken down.*" Suffield at once arranged to go to London, and arrived there in the evening, travelling third-class—for he accepted his poorer position at once without demur. "And, really," he said to himself, "I believe I prefer third, unless I should want to sleep." When he entered the house at Rutland Gate he went first to the library, and as he glanced round upon the serried portraits of the Lords of Padiham it was with an absolute sense of relief that he thought he would soon see them no more; he would no longer be afflicted with the sense of their superciliousness. He would go back to his own people, with his own people, and live and die among his own people, performing the duties he had foolishly laid down to take up others for which he had little taste and indifferent aptitude. He was thinking thus hopefully when his wife entered behind him.

"I have been looking for you, my dear," said she, approaching to greet him with a kiss. "Oh, my poor, dear George!" she cried. "My owd lad! What has come to you? You've no color in your poor cheek, and your hair's as white as it should be at eighty! Oh, my husband! My dear! And has it all worked this change upon you, my poor lad! My poor George! Oh, my dear! And you never told me!"

She kissed him, and wept over him as a girl might over her soldier-lover from whom she has long been parted, and who returns wounded and worn. And he stroked her dark hair in silence, and kept as firm a mouth as he could.

"You got my letters, of course?" said Suffield, who had written with some reserve to his wife daily during his absence in Lancashire.

"I did. But what about yesterday, George, my dear? What's the end of it all?" she asked.

"It's all over, my lass," he answered.

"You mean," she exclaimed, clasping her hands tightly before her, "that we are completely ruined?"

"Not altogether that, Joan, my dear," said he. "But we must leave this house, and sell or let th' hall and park, and we must let Parliament alone and go back to work."

"You have not made much of Parliament, have you, my dear owd lad? So that need not distress us," she observed, with a smile.

"No, lass," said he; "I have not. I haven't spoken, I admit, but I've given a good many votes, and I've set a good example. There's too much talk there already and too little work."

"And it's all," said she, taking little note of what he had said, but sitting down and glancing this way and that, as if to review the whole situation, "through the recklessness of that boy!"

"Nay, lass; it's our own fault," said Suffield. "Don't be too hard on th' lad. He's our own son, Joan; carried away wi' his own plans for getting on. He meant no harm—I ha' thought it all out. The thing is he shouldna ha' had th' whole machine trusted to him at his age."

"And is it really so bad, George, as that we must go back to Lancashire and live in a small house?"

"It is, my lass," said he, turning away and sitting down, saddened by the distress written on her face. "There's about a hundred thousand gone, more or less!"

She followed him to his seat. The full light of the lamp now fell on him, and she again noted the worn and aged look he wore. The change in him smote her anew to the heart, and set free again her native founts of tenderness and generosity.

"Oh, my poor old lad!" she cried, throwing her arms about his neck. "How terrible it must have been for you to bear! I had hardly thought of that! I believe I've grown a selfish woman, my poor dear! My George! My husband!" She laid her head upon his breast and wept.

"There, my dear lass!" said he, soothing her. "There! my dear wife! My owd sweetheart! My bonny bird!"

"Don't say these things to me now, George!" she murmured. "I must think about all this, and see where we are. Have patience with me, won't you?"

"Patience, Joan, my dear!" said he. "Of course I'll have patience! And if this business makes us pull well together again, I shall thank God for it from tha bottom of my heart! Do you

know what we shall do, my lass? We'll go away back out of the hurry and scurry of this London—when all is said and done it's not very filling or satisfying!—away back to our ain countrie! You remember, Joan, how we used to sing,

“O the oak, and the ash, and the bonny birken tree,
They are all growing green in my ain countrie!”

We'll go back, my dear, to our ain folk, and we'll be as happy as ever we were—happier than we ha' been this twelvemonth! I ha' got my eye on that nice little house—for a year or two at least—wi' th' creeper and the jasmine on the walls, and the evening-primroses in the side-garden! And thou shalt be my own brave manager again—mother o' the house, and queen o' the whole place!”

“You are very, very good to me, my dear!” said she.

Truly, “sweet are the uses of adversity!” This worthy couple were beginning to discover (as many have discovered before them) that worldly success, the gawds and superfluities of life, are only won by the sacrifice of much of life's essence. The cares of this world and of a family, and the deceitfulness of wealth and ambition, had choked the tender shoots of sentiment and driven love into abeyance, and therefore demonstrations of love into desuetude. It was only now when they were awaked by the shock of their calamity that they perceived how far apart they had drifted, and then they came together again, provoked by something of the warmth of a new affection!

“And now you will see George, won't you?” asked his wife. “And about Lord Clitheroe?” she said, suddenly. “He's with George. I suppose he must be told?”

“Of course he must!” said Suffield. “Mustn't he? Are you afraid he'll want to cry off with Phemy?”

“He may,” said his wife; “though not of himself, I think, but he may under family pressure.”

The discussion of that matter and of other matters in their mind was interrupted by the announcement of the servant that Miss Raynor had called and was in the drawing-room.

“I wanted to speak to you about Bel, by-the-way,” said Mrs. Suffield. “She has called here almost every day since you have been gone, asking how things were going and if you were back yet. I can't make her out. She's so unlike herself, so subdued, so afraid of something, as it were. She hasn't been the same person, it seems to me, since Christmas.”

"Sayst tha?" exclaimed Suffield. "Dost think she may repent o' her engagement to George? I always thought, tha knows, lass, that Ainsworth was th' man. Poor Bel! It won't do to let her make a mistake! We've had enow o' mistakes in th' family! I must talk to her."

So they parted then, he to talk to Isabel, and she to make a preliminary statement to Lord Clitheroe, who was sitting by George.

"Well, Bel," said Suffield, as he entered the drawing-room, "what's this I hear about tha?"

Isabel turned palpably pale.

"What, uncle?" she asked. Then she exclaimed, "Oh, how changed you are! My poor uncle!"

"Thou'rt changed, too, I hear. Looking ill and worried, I'm told. Let *me* look at tha?"

She submitted to his inspection, and blushed under it.

"What dost blush for?" he said, kindly. "I believe thou'rt turning more of a silly girl than thou ever wert! But tha doesn't look well. Tell me: what's th' matter?"

"I'm really very well, uncle," said she. "But I have been troubled about you. How has this business turned out with you, uncle? Aunt has told me something of it."

He was silent, as if considering what he should say.

"Won't you tell me?" she said.

"Well," said he, "things have turned out what would be called 'bad'; but somehow their 'badness' makes me happier than if they had turned out better. We'll ha' to give up this house at once, and sell or let the Hall and all about it; we shall be just able to keep th' works going, and so we'll ha' to live in a very economical way in a small house for some years."

"My poor, dear uncle!" exclaimed Isabel.

"Law bless thy heart and soul!" said he. "I like to think of it. I shall be out of this blessed Parliament business; and I'll go back to real work! And," he added, in a lower tone, as if to himself, "the wife and I'll be together again!"

"Uncle," said Isabel, "I have a request—a petition—to make of you."

"Say on, my lass," said Suffield. "Thou shalt ha' 't, though 'twere th' half o' my poor kingdom."

"It's a favor I failed to get from you, uncle," said Isabel, "a little while ago."

"What's that?"

"Take this money now! You need it now, if you didn't before. Don't—please, don't—refuse me again! Dear uncle, you don't know how much you will oblige me, how happy you will make me, by doing as I ask you!"

"Bel, my dear, let's ha' no more o' that! That money's thine, and 'twill be settled upon thee at thy marriage! Hast seen George, by-the-way?"

"Yes," said she, with a blush; "I have seen him. He is changed, too."

"There's a small favor I ha' to ask o' thee, Bel, my dear," said her uncle, taking her hand. "I ha' been a kind o' father to you, lass, ha'n't I?"

"Dear uncle, you have been more than a father! you've been the dearest friend as well!"

"Now I claim th' privilege o' a father and friend. Answer me a question, like a good, honest girl as you are: art quite happy in thy engagement to George? Don't be afraid to answer me, my dear!"

Isabel was taken unawares, and was painfully moved; but she kept her self-possession.

"That is a question, uncle!" said she. "But I will not answer it until you have granted me the favor I ask, and accepted my money."

Her uncle shook his head, dropped her hand, and turned away. That had barely happened when Mrs. Suffield entered to say that George wished to see his father. Isabel said she could not stay longer that night, so she went; and her uncle and aunt went up to George, who was in bed.

Father and son gripped each other's hand and looked into each other's eyes, with perfect understanding of sincere repentance on the one side and complete forgiveness on the other.

"It has taken it out of you, dad," said George.

Then his father, having described his difficulties with Gorgonio and the cotton, demanded an account of his son's, and his prospective son-in-law's, adventures.

"Thou'rt more reduced than me, my lad," said he.

"I'm all right, dad," answered George. "I'll be up to-morrow."

"No, you won't," said Clitheroe, stroking his big red beard. "He caught low fever in Spain," he observed to Suffield; "the floods were out."

"You had rather a bad time of it, then?" said Suffield.

"Very bad," answered Clitheroe, looking at his hairy hands.

"And where are your prisoners? I suppose you brought them safe?"

"And now," said Clitheroe, "they're in safe keeping!—the brutes!"

"Hadn't yo' better tell me all about it?" said Suffield.

"Let me ask you this, father," said George, with a smile, "before Clitheroe begins his story: Can you understand anybody being afraid of your Tame Philosopher and secretary—mortally, supernaturally afraid?"

"No," said Suffield, decidedly; "I certainly cannot."

"Well, I have found there is such a man; and his name is Daniel Trichinopoly! McFie is the one man in England that Daniel fears, or, for the matter of that, I believe, respects. He has a dread of his tremendous speeches, which he can't understand any more than I can, and he thinks him learned enough to be a wizard, or something of that kind. I've told you that, father, because if it hadn't been for Daniel's fear of the philosopher we would never have caught him or the other! He and Tanderjee would have got away a week sooner, and have reached Port Said—where they meant to leave the ship—if Daniel had not been afraid to stir while the philosopher was weltering in that opium-den; he was afraid the spells of the philosopher would blight his life if he did not himself release him from that horrible place! And Daniel insisted, in spite of all Tanderjee could say—insisted on staying to release him! So your philosopher has been of more use than I ever thought he would be!"

"It is certainly most astonishing," said Suffield. "But let me hear the whole story."

Clitheroe, then, aided by George at intervals, related their adventures.

They reached Marseilles at midnight of the day after they left London. No regular steamer could possibly reach Gibraltar in time to intercept the *Travancore*, and both floods and bandits were said to be out in Spain, so that the train did not seem hopeful either. They therefore resolved to try to hire a fast steam-vessel, and that without delay, or else they would not reach Gibraltar in time. By exceeding good-luck (so good that George called it providential) they met on the quay a yachting acquaintance of Clitheroe's, who was waiting for his belated boat to take

him on board his steam-yacht outside. To him Clitheroe told their urgent need, and he at once responded by offering to take them to Gibraltar. Therefore, when the boat came, all four entered it: the owner, Clitheroe and George, and the detective. The weather was foul, and they reckoned it would take them all their time to reach Gibraltar by Tuesday, the *Travancore's* day of call. It was then George showed his prowess and skill as a stoker. He stripped to feed the furnace himself, on a method he had developed for keeping the fire always bright, and forcing the pace without waste of fuel.

"If everything else failed him," said Clitheroe, "he would soon get a place as chief stoker." (That was his only allusion to their losses.)

They reached Gibraltar in good time, and had everything in order for the arrest of the fugitives. When the *Travancore* came in they boarded her without ostentation. Daniel was nicely caught as he appeared from below to take the air, and Tanderjee had a hand laid on his shoulder as he stood contemplating the great fortified rock; neither, it was clear, had in the least expected that they might be pursued and arrested. Daniel set his arrest down to the evil divinations of the Tame Philosopher. Daniel wished to throw his turban overboard, but George caught it, and found the plans concealed in its folds; the bank draft on Bombay for the £6000 was found on Tanderjee's person, and in his baggage a considerable number of sovereigns.

"You did very well then, my lad," said Suffield. "I was afraid to ask you what success you'd had."

So they brought their prisoners away in the yacht without mishap. Daniel's behavior was singular. He labored to propitiate George; he was submissive, sweet-tempered, and affable; and he begged that his hands might be left free, even if his eyes were tied, so that he might stoke the furnace in place of "the respectable Sahib George." But George answered him, "There is a saying, Daniel, in your own India: 'If a man deceives me once, shame on him; if he deceives me twice, shame on me.'" With which words of wisdom Daniel seemed so subdued and humbled that he urged his request no more.

They steamed on for about three days, making but poor progress because of a head-wind. But on the third day a gale arose and grew to a hurricane. They panted and bored through a complete welter and bewilderment of mingled sea and sky. Never, George declared, had he been in such weather, nor had he ever

conceived the Mediterranean capable of it. They had been somewhat hugging the Spanish shore, and in their attempt to weather the projecting land between Alicante and Valencia they were driven ashore; but, fortunately, they drove into a fairly sheltered cove. They passed a terrible night on land, even though after an hour the storm sank almost as suddenly as it had arisen, and though they were able to bring some means of shelter ashore from the yacht. Then they had experience how little Daniel's professions were to be trusted. He and Tanderjee were caught in the night in an attempt on the persons and purses of George and Clitheroe. (The detective had been left on guard over them, but had succumbed to sleep.) In the morning they found a fishing village; but by then George was alternately shivering and burning with fever. By the close of that first day on land he was helpless and delirious, and they had perforce to remain in such poor accommodation as they could find.

"It was a terrible time," said George. "But the Spanish folk were very kind, and I should like to go and see them again some day."

Meantime the owner of the yacht and his small crew took the vessel back to Alicante for such repairs as she demanded. Those left behind resolved to remain until the return of the yacht; for they were in a wild country, far from a railway—and the safety of railway travelling was still uncertain at best—and George was and would be for days unequal to the fatigues of a rough journey. At length the yacht returned, and so—and so they returned to Marseilles, and home.

"And all's well that ends well," said Suffield. "And now, my dear," said he to his wife, "would you and our good friend Clitheroe mind leaving George and me together? I have one or two things I should like to talk to him about." When the two had withdrawn: "You've seen Isabel, I suppose, my lad?" said he.

"Yes, father, I've seen her."

"And what dost think o' her—her looks, I mean? Dostna think she looks ill?"

"She doesn't look well, certainly. I suppose she has been worried like the rest of us. Poor Bel! I don't know why our worry should wear her."

"That's just it," said his father. "I don't think 'worry' accounts for it. Hast ever noticed anything in her way wi' yo' that might make yo' think, when yo' consider that she's not just over head and ears in love wi' yo', my lad?"

"I don't think, dad, she *is* over head and ears; she is very nice and affectionate; I think—I believe—she likes me very much. What more would you have? I don't think Bel is a girl to be over head and ears in love; she is too sensible and wise."

"That's where, in my opinion," said his father, "most o' us are wrong about that girl. Now, my dear lad, I should be sorry to upset you about nothing; but I think it's best to be frank about this matter I ha' in my mind. Bel is a girl that don't make much fuss about her feelings, but she's got them stronger than most girls. One o' her strongest feelings—I know it; I understand her—is enormous: absurd gratitude to this miserable family for the little we've done for her. It has always troubled her that she had no great chance to show it. A chance came. Dost know, lad, that twice over she's begged and prayed me to take her money—all o't!—to help us in this business?"

"She pressed it—pressed it hard!—on me that afternoon I went away."

"There yo' are! Now I ha' it borne in on me—I may be wrong; I hope, my lad, for your sake, I am—that her promise to marry you, lad, is part o' that same absurd gratitude! She knew you wanted her; she knew I'd like it; and she saw latterly your mother was not against it! And so, to please us all, thinking little o' herself, she engages herself to marry you, my lad! And now, when she thinks o' th' thing, it looks a more serious business to give herself away like that than she imagined. I'm sure she's got stronger feelings in her than she ever seems to ha' shown to you, lad. I hope to goodness, my dear lad, I'm wrong. But tha dost-na want to mak' another mistake, and tha dostna want, I'm sure, to tak' Bel to wife on those terms. Think it ower quietly, lad; speak to Bel about it to-morrow—she'll be here, no doubt—and according as tha finds her, do th' right thing by her and by thysen!"

George was pale and agitated. "All right, father. I'll think it over. You'd better leave me alone now, dad."

"God bless tha, lad," said his father, with a quiver of the lip, "and gie thee a brave heart!"

George lay still—wretchedly still!—for a little while; and then suddenly he jumped from bed and hurriedly dressed, weak and trembling though he was. In a few minutes he slipped downstairs, passed from the house, and called a cab. He must see Bel! He could not wait!

CHAPTER XLII

THE BURDEN ROLLS AWAY

THAT evening Isabel had accorded Alan Ainsworth an interview, with the resolution to see him no more again for a long time ; they were in an *impasse*, she urged ; nothing could be done at present ; George was in a condition in which it would be mean and cruel to trouble him ; therefore she pleaded that Alan should seek no more to see her until the situation was much more propitious.

"But, you see, dear heart," said Alan, "that our difficulty must remain locked so long as we keep back the key of it."

"I know, Alan, I know !" said she. "But when I saw George looking so broken down with his journey and so ashamed of his mistakes, how could I say what I had meant to say ? To beat down an already bruised spirit !—to add a crueler stroke, perhaps, than any he had yet endured !—no, I could not do that ! And then to have it thought that I had said what I had said because he is a ruined man !"

"No one who knows you, Isabel," said he, "would ever think that ! The fear of that may be dismissed. But after all, my own dear, it *must* be said—must it not ?—and every day's delay makes the saying only harder. And there are critical operations which it is kinder to perform at once, however ill able a man may seem to bear them."

"I suppose there are," said she. "I know it is said there are. But it seems to me, Alan, that you have not much pity for George."

"Don't say that, Isabel. If he loves you at all as I do, I know how terribly he will feel when he is told he must give you up. It will be like the very prospect—the pang—of death ! The world will seem to end !—the whole universe to rush to chaos !"

"Do you love me so much, then ?"

"I love you, my love," said he, "as I love my life."

"But," said she, with a spark of her old spirit, "does not a true lover say to his mistress that he loves her better than life ?"

"That, my sweetheart," said he, "is the nonsense, the hyper-

bole, of love. I wish you to live, and myself to live also, that we may live together; therefore I love you as my life."

"Yes, love!" said she. "Give me your hand that I may feel strong. Poor George! I am a foolish, weak woman! I never thought I was. Did you ever think I was?"

"You are not, my love!" said he. "This is a very difficult and trying time for you!—it would be for the strongest woman! It is your strength—your true strength—that makes you feel and behave as if you were weak!—the strength of your affections, the strength of your pity for George, and the strength of your regard for your uncle and aunt! Another woman without your strength of tenderness would disregard or sweep away these feelings, and in her absolutely selfish weakness appear strong."

"Yes," said she, "I think you are right!—I hope you are! Tell me, love, I am not weak, and then I shall be strong!"

"Let me help you in this, my sweetheart," said he. "Let me go to George and ask him to release you. It is only right that I should do that, since it is I who have put you in the wrong with him—with my obstinate folly in trying to make a position before I spoke to you!"

"It seems to me very mean," said she, "to put you as a kind of buffer between him and myself. I don't think I can do that, Alan dear. At any rate, let me go to my aunt first and tell her all. Don't you think that will be best?"

"I think, dear, that will be a good thing to do," he answered.

"She may be harder than my uncle would have been," said Isabel; "but she is a woman, and she may better understand—especially since she was not at all anxious a year ago that I should marry George. I will go to her to-morrow, then."

"And you will tell her, sweetheart, all that *must* be told, won't you?"

"I will."

At that moment the maid-servant announced "Mr. Suffield," and turning their heads, they saw George standing in the doorway. They had each other's hand. Isabel's impulse was to snatch her hand away; but Alan held it, and still held it tight as they rose together to receive George. The meaning of the situation was so unmistakable that none of the three said a word for an instant. At length George spoke.

"May I ask you, Mr. Ainsworth, to leave my cousin and me alone a little while?"

"I should like to have a word with you before you go, Mr. Suffield," said Ainsworth. "I shall be in the dining-room."

"May I sit down, Bel?" said George, when Ainsworth had gone.

"Sit, George, sit!" she exclaimed. "Oh, why have you come out weak and ill as you are?"

"My father told me," said he, "something under which I couldn't rest; I had to get up and come to you, Bel. He suspects I have made another mistake — that I have got you to promise to be my wife without getting your proper love! Is that true, Bel? Answer me, dear!"

"I have done you a great wrong," said she. "I have committed a blunder — a shameful blunder — for which I ought to be punished. I am ashamed of myself, George, and—I have to ask your forgiveness!"

He looked on her with uncontrollable longing and pain; but he said nothing.

"I have led you to believe," she continued, "that I loved you enough to marry you! I love you, George; but not enough—not in that way—not as you ought to be loved by a wife! But if you wish me to keep my promise, I will keep it!"

He still had his eyes fixed on her, but he said nothing. She slipped to her knees by him and hid her face on his knee, while she took his hand. He drew his hand quickly away (it was the only sign he gave of resentment), and they remained thus silent for some moments.

"Is it Ainsworth?" said he, at length.

"Yes," she answered.

There was another pause; and then he put his hand in Isabel's; she kissed it.

"You forgive me, then?" said she, raising her eyes to meet his.

"Forgive you, Bel?" said he, quietly, though there was a fevered light in his eyes. "We won't use that word. I am sure you meant me only kindness!"

"I did, George! I did!"

"It has been all a mistake, I can see," he continued. "It is a good thing that this has happened now. If it had happened a month ago I don't know how I would have taken it! I take it now quietly, you see," he said, with a wry smile.

"Oh, don't, George!" she exclaimed. "Don't talk so bitterly!"

"It is bitter to lose you, Bel," said he; "but, no; I won't com-

plain! I had no business to think of marrying! I was no more than a conceited boy, fresh from school! I have discovered I am only a boy—not fit to be trusted with anything! And when I am well I am going to make a new start—as you will, Bel!”

“And you will let me be good to you, my poor George?” said Isabel.

“For Heaven’s sake, don’t pity me, Bel!” he exclaimed. “I can’t stand it! Give me one kiss, Bel!” She kissed him; now that she felt the close bond that had bound them was dissolved she could do that without reluctance.

“It is over!” said he; “but, Bel, you mustn’t ask me to see *him* yet awhile! Tell him I understand what he would say! I don’t blame him!—but I can’t see him!”

And so in haste he took his hat and went away. Isabel turned to find Ainsworth in the dining-room.

“It is over, Alan,” said she, when she had delivered George’s message, “and I feel mean and ashamed. Please leave me, dear. I cannot bear to talk now!”

And he also went away and left Isabel alone.

Next day she went again to Rutland Gate, desperately resolved to have her way with her uncle in the matter of the money. He was out—gone to see the Padiham agent about the surrender of the house—but her aunt was in her room, and sent word that she wished to see her. Isabel found her emptying boxes and wardrobes preparatory to the migration to Lancashire. She blamed Isabel for having almost frightened the life out of her when she had found her son had gone out the previous night, and was in a generally resentful mood.

“It is strange, Bel,” said she, “that you should not have known your own mind when you gave George your promise!”

“It was my own heart I did not know, aunt.”

“Mind or heart, it comes to the same thing.”

“I deceived myself; I thought I could marry George without the complete love you should have for the man you will spend your life with.”

“Fiddle-de-dee!” said her aunt, impatiently. “What should a girl know of the complete love you talk about?”

“The nature God has given you,” replied Isabel, “will tell you that, if you are not too foolish to understand it.”

“No, it won’t, Bel,” said her aunt, “however hard you listen. Only being in love can teach you that; if not with one man, then

with another. And you have known Alan Ainsworth long enough, and surely you have known him well enough, to have understood all about the necessity of your complete love before you gave your promise to George?"

"I did understand," said she, humbly. "But I thought he did not care for me. He was only holding back because of my wretched money, and because he wanted to make a position of his own first! Why are you so hard, aunt? Why do you make it so difficult for me to tell you about it?"

"Hard, Bel? You talk like a silly girl! If I am hard it is because I am a woman and can understand! I do not blame you for having fallen in love with Mr. Ainsworth; I blame you for getting yourself engaged to my son while you were really in love with the other man! It is for that I blame you!"

"I am to blame. I do not seek to excuse myself. But I cannot help thinking, aunt, that if George and I had got engaged to each other a year ago, you would have been very glad to hear we had broken the engagement off as quickly as now!"

Her aunt looked at her angrily; but Isabel endured the look, and it fell.

"You are a wicked girl to think so!—much more, to say so!" said her aunt.

"And why, aunt?" said Isabel; "is it wicked to speak the truth? It is not always kind or right to speak the truth, but you have driven me now to speak it!"

"Driven you? Because I have said you were to blame for engaging yourself to my son when you cared for another man? Because I feel for my son when you have bruised him when he is already crushed?"

"No, aunt! It is not that! It is not that! It is none of these things! You know it is not! It is that you are hard and unsympathetic! You are a woman, and a mother; you feel for your son, but you feel nothing for me!—you do not care what may become of me! And do I not feel for George? The pain of the pain I must give him has been upon me for days and days! But you do not understand! You do not care to understand! You are not interested in me! You never were! You never loved me, aunt! Never!"

"You were always a rebellious child, Bel! And now you wag an ungrateful and wicked tongue!"

But Isabel was now stricken with distress. Her strained feel-

ings had given way, and produced these jangling complaints, and she trembled with the excitement of them.

"Forgive me, aunt!" said she. "It is indeed wicked and ungrateful to talk to you like that! I don't know what has come to me! But, oh, you do not know what I have endured for days! Forgive me, dear!"

She impulsively embraced her aunt, who leaned her head on her shoulder and wept.

"Oh, wicked, wicked creature that I am!" cried Isabel. "But why, dear, why were you so hard with me? Why would you not understand how it had come about?"

And these two women embraced and kissed each other, and understood each other better in that hour than they had all their lives before.

"I must see Uncle George," said Isabel, when the emotions of both had been assuaged somewhat. "I wonder if he is come in?"

Her aunt made inquiry, found he had returned, and told Isabel he was waiting for her in the library.

"Well, my lass," said he, when she had entered the library and he had closed the door.

Her self-control gave way utterly, and she threw herself sobbing into her uncle's arms.

"There, my lass!—there!" he murmured, patting her shoulder. "Thou'rt wi' thy owd uncle, and he cannot find it in his heart to blame tha! Though 'twould ha' saved a lot o' trouble and cryin' if things had gone straight for'ard, instead o' comin' right in this hindforemost kind o' way. But it's come right now, and we mun be as good friends as ever. Ainsworth's a good lad; and if you love him and he loves you, you're both set in the right way. And George, of course—well, George has got to open a new account all round; that's only right, after all. Well, now, my lass, about this money. Sit tha down, and let's ha' it out."

"You must take it, uncle!" said Isabel, drying her eyes. "Please! If you want me to live happily you must take it!"

"Suppose," said Suffield, "I take the money over and pay tha a percentage?"

"No, no, uncle!" she cried. "It must be yours, wholly and entirely! I never want to see anything of it again, or to hear of it!"

"It's queer," meditated he, "how thou dost hate that money! I wonder, now, if there was anything odd about the way Harry got it? However, thou sayst a percentage won't do. No. But what,

lass, if this money should be as unlucky to me as it has been to thee?"

"It won't be, uncle!" said she. "It cannot be! You are a good man, and you will use it well and wisely!"

"I don't know," said he, "that that 'll make any difference. Nevertheless, I suppose I must risk it. But what the dickens," he demanded, "art tha going to do without it?"

"I suppose," said she, with a deep blush, "we shall be married soon."

"Of course, of course," said her uncle. "And *he* wants tha to gi'e this money up?"

"He does, of course," answered Isabel.

"Ah, he's young yet," said he; "he's young. But what about thy father's keep at that place?"

"We hope he needn't stay longer than the year; but in any case Alan wishes to pay it."

"And thy Aged?"

"Among us we will manage that, too—Alan and others."

"Seems to me," said her uncle, "that's rather hard on Alan. A man might as well start wi' a fam'ly. Howsoever, these things 'll get his hand into th' way o' extra expense; they'll be o' use to him that way. Well, I suppose thou must ha' thy way wi' thy owd uncle, as thou always did."

"Dear uncle," said she, "how kind and indulgent you have always been!"

"Well, lass, I'll take this over for two or three years. By the end o' that time thou'll ha' learned th' value o' money better, wi' one thing and another, and may be glad to ha' it back."

"Never, uncle—never!" she protested. "You must take it for good and all, for better or worse."

"Well, Isabel, my lass, I never was so unwilling to do anything for tha. But thou wilt ha' thy way. I'll tak' and use th' money till thou dost ask for it back."

"If I am wilful, uncle," said Isabel, with a smile, "you are obstinate. But let us leave it as you say—leave it till I ask for it back. I am really very grateful to you, uncle! You have done me a great favor! You have taken a terrible load off me!" Just then a beam of the afternoon sun, passing by the lofty and supercilious lords of Padiham, shed its gentle, wintry radiance on these two. "It's a good omen!" exclaimed Isabel. "Say, uncle dear, that it is! Forgive me, dear, all the wrong I have done! And kiss me!"

Suffield was moved. He said nothing; but he put his kindly hand on his niece's head; and there was a blessing in the act.

"How is it you two always get on so well together?" said Mrs. Suffield, who entered at that moment.

"Tha knows, Bel," said Suffield, taking his wife's hand, "I believe she begins to be jealous in her old age."

"Old age!" exclaimed his wife. "Speak for yourself, George!"

Isabel went to her aunt and embraced her.

"You forgive me, then?" she murmured. Her aunt's answer was a caress and a kiss. "I will come again before you go," added Isabel—"to see Phemy."

And thus in mutual forgiveness and reconciliation ended the stress and storm which, with minds less just and generous and hearts less tender and true, might have resulted in estrangement and hatred.

CHAPTER XLIII

DISSOLVING VIEWS

Thus Isabel stepped from her proud position as the courted heiress, and divested herself of her "gold and jewels," her "silver and pearls." When her aunt took her departure for Lancashire (Mr. Suffield having still to remain in town for a day or two) Isabel met her at the station with a small box, which she enjoined her aunt to take great care of and not to open till she was in her own north. That box contained the jewelry of rare foreign workmanship which Uncle Harry had left; so resolved was she to be rid of all she could be rid of that had belonged to Uncle Harry. She tried to be rid also of the furniture and other things that had been bought with Uncle Harry's money, but Ainsworth had thought it was a pity that her pretty home should be broken up, and he had suggested a compromise. He had gone to Mr. Suffield and proposed himself to pay for the things. But Suffield had been so angry at the suggestion, and had so obstinately declared that if he heard any more of it he would have nothing to do with the money at all, that the matter was allowed to drop. Then Isabel sweetly asked Ainsworth why the flat should be given up; would it not do as a dwelling for both of them?

"And then," said she, "then I shall feel as if I had brought you something—a very little something!—besides myself and the cares I took upon myself."

And then Ainsworth, greatly daring, asked, since the dwelling was ready and since she was now—or soon would be—a mere spinster without an income, why they should not prepare to join hands and purses as soon as possible?

So it came to pass that an early day in spring was fixed for their wedding. Isabel went to see her father with the uncertain design of asking him to perform the usual office of a father on such an occasion, and "give her away"; but his sequestered life on the Surrey hills seemed so serene, he was so occupied with his *Defence of Transcendentalism*, and he showed so remote an in-

terest in what she told him of herself, that she thought it was a pity to disturb his equable leisure.

"I am delighted to hear it, my child," said he. "Marriage with love is the completing of a woman; so she fulfils the law of her being. You should read Luther on marriage, my dear. He has given the most beautiful picture of the nature and ends and duties of the wedded life you are ever likely to read."

That was all he said; and so he turned again to his *Defence of Transcendentalism*. Isabel, therefore, turned to her uncle: who but he—the kind and indulgent nourisher of her youth and friend of her maturer years—her all but father—should give her away? He was asked, and at once agreed, to perform the paternal office; and so Isabel went down to Lancashire to fulfil the time before her wedding, for she desired to be married from her uncle's house.

Meanwhile Mr. Suffield had been getting through the business for which he stayed behind in London. He had arranged with the whip of his party to resign his seat, and to pair for the session. One important division he could not be paired for, and he remained a day or two longer than he had intended to perform his duty to his party. There was another debate on Indian affairs (it concerned opium this time), and his secretary, the Tame Philosopher, had prevailed on him to make a speech. He had written for him a most learned discourse, packed with words of the peculiarly tame-philosophic kind. Suffield sat down for a little in the library of the House of Commons and wrinkled his brows over the sheets, but his thoughts would wander after his family and his affairs into Lancashire.

"I can make nought o' this!" he said, and rose, folding the sheets away in his pocket.

He went down into the House, and promising himself that he would not miss the night-train home, he sat and listened in a half-dazed condition to the droning and the buzzing, and grew weary of it all. One of the whips of his party came to him and asked him if he meant to carry out the desire he had expressed to speak on the question.

"Nay," said he; "I ha' nought to say. But I'll vote."

Still he sat, and still the debate drawled and mumbled on—with an occasional screech or two—till eleven o'clock struck. There was no sign that the division was at hand; and he went to the whip and begged that he might be paired for the division, because he must hurry down to Lancashire on business. The whip looked

coldly on him, but acceded to his request; and Suffield walked out of the House never to enter it again.

In the lobby he encountered the Tame Philosopher, hanging about in expectation of hearing his own rhapsodical and bombastical periods delivered by his patron.

"You are not going away!" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"I am," answered Suffield, cramming his oration into his hands. "Thou'rt th' only man that can fitly deliver that fine composition. Keep it, my friend. This question, if I'm not mistaken, 'll come up again, and then thou mayst be in th' House thyself, and canst deliver it!"

He drove away to the station (he had brought his travelling-bag to the House) and caught his train to the North. He entered a sleeping-carriage, and quickly put himself to bed. And as the train rolled away through the soft night, charged with premonitory whiffs and whispers of spring, the unbidden refrain kept rolling through and through his mind—

"Oh, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny birken tree,
They're all growing green in my ain countree!"

And at length he went to sleep, to awake in his own Lancashire.

And so the interest of our story fades from London; for the Tame Philosopher soon followed his patron back to the North (he could not live, he declared, "without the solace of seeing my dear George Suffield, a true man's-a-man-for-a'-that"), and Doughty's existence was regularly merged now in Ainsworth's, and interest of whose life was now in Lancashire. Gorgonio was heard of no more; and as for Tanderjee and the blameless Daniel, they had fitting punishments meted out to them at the Lancashire Spring Assizes for felony and for obtaining money on false pretences.

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But before we say adieu to the excellent family that has largely figured in this story, let us see how they were affected by the revolution in their circumstances. They dwelt no longer in the noble old Holdsworth Hall; that had been let to a Dutch-German-French Jew, who gambled successfully on the Stock Exchange. They lived in a modest, old-fashioned house on the border of the village which Suffield had built, George having rooms of his own in town to be always in supervision of the City part of the business.

Isabel (who lived in her uncle's house till her marriage), could not but note with delight how he and her aunt renewed their youth. Both might have been held somewhat excused if they had expressed or shown regret for their lost wealth and position, and resentment against the necessity for returning to work when they had thought that work was over, according to the doleful habit of people who have been "reduced"; but neither of them behaved as the foolish people behave. They were busy, cheery, and harmonious by day, and by night they were wrapped in the peaceful and profound sleep of the just and merciful. Suffield was up and into the works as early in the morning as his work-people; and Mrs. Suffield was up not much later, and with her daughter and her maid-of-all-work setting her house in order and preparing breakfast. It was to Isabel a delightful and stimulating lesson in life to see how her aunt, the courageous, vigorous-minded woman who had held her own with duchesses and female politicians in "the gilded saloons of greatness," shone with all the virtues of the house-mother in the little Lancashire home, and was evidently at peace with herself and with the world. "Of such," thought Isabel, "must be the women who have made Englishmen great with their peculiar quality of greatness."

And it was not at home only that her aunt was active and helpful; she was also helpful and active in the village among her husband's people; for Suffield was not of those employers who consider that their responsibility for their workers is at an end with the payment of their weekly wages. There were particularly gaffers and gammers upon whom the cold of death was gradually creeping while yet they lived, who needed such comfort and encouragement as a wise woman can best impart: cheering words and comforting food and drink. Isabel knew these pensioners from of old, who had so long benefited by the Suffield bounty that they had come to think they had a prescriptive right to the care of "th' mester," as most people think they have a right to the regard of Providence. Isabel went among these ancient, quaint creatures alone sometimes, and then she heard how her uncle and aunt were regarded by them.

"Aw'm real and glad," said one gray gaffer to her, who was ancient enough to wear knee-breeches and coarse stockings, "th' missus ha' come back—though they do say as how it's because th' mester ha' lost lots o' brass. . . . Brass or no brass, hoo (she) is a rare un to mak' broth. . . . I set on my lass and owd Betsy to

try to mak' th' broth; but, bless tha! they conna mak' it nohow. . . . Aw reckon th' missus has a special kind o' barley."

Of "th' mester" she heard more sympathetic commendation still. She visited an old woman supposed to be dying, who had in her time worked very hard and borne a large family of great sons, and who had known "th' mester's" mother.

"Ay. Aw knowed th' mester's mother," said she to Isabel, while an attentive neighbor sat by; "as clean and nate a woman as could be, and as bonny and free-handed as th' mester himsen. When aw sit down i' th' Kingdom o' Heaven aw'll ha' a good look round for th' mester's mother to tell her how well th' mester's going on. Happen aw'll clap e'en on her sitting right again' me; or we're fro' th' same village."

"Happen," said her neighbor, almost as old and quaint a creature as herself—"happen thou'lt gi'e a look round and find out my owd John and tell him about Bessy."

"Nay," said the other, "aw'll do nought o' th' sort! Trapesing round to look for thy owd John! . . . When aw get to th' Kingdom, aw'll just put me on a clean apron, and sit me down in th' first cheer, and rest me! But aw'll look out for th' mester's mother!"

Thus work, peace, and contentment reigned in the Suffield home, and throughout the village which Suffield had created, and which depended on him. The only person who seemed at all sad, and who occasionally sighed, was Euphemia. And it presently became evident what was troubling her; not reduced circumstances, not the necessity of putting on an apron and performing the duties of a parlor-maid, but because her "Beast" seemed to have ridden away, and because since she had not seen him her mind turned him into a prince. When her father had to announce to Lord Clitheroe their contrasted circumstances she bravely (but with no terrible pang of heart) offered Clitheroe his liberty. He refused to accept it, although he anticipated that his father and mother would strongly object to his carrying out his engagement; he declared, however, he would wait and "lie low" (by which he meant "bide his time") until the not very distant day when his invalid old father must slip out of the title and estates. From that day Phemy had not seen nor heard from her "Beast," and she began to think he must have ridden away indeed. Then since she had

not seen him dancing attendance on her she had begun to long for his presence, and at length to be convinced that she loved him and was going to lose him; such being the wayward fashion of love with maidens of Euphemia's character.

But on a certain day a tall horseman, with a big flaming-red beard and a piece of crape on his arm, rode up to the Suffield door and alighted. It was the "Beast-Prince," come to claim his bride. His old father was dead, and he had stepped into the empty shoes and inherited the empty title, and by right of his freedom now to do as he pleased he had come to his lady-love. Euphemia welcomed him with more demureness, and at the same time with more fervor, than she had ever before shown.

"Well, little one," said he, "you see I've come, now that I am free to do as I like."

"I see you have come," said she, with something of her old sauciness; "you are a very noticeable fact;" but she refrained from calling him "beast" or "goose."

"Come, now," said he, "have you missed me at all?—tell me."

"A little," she answered; "not much." But her look was better than her words.

They were closeted together for a little, and then they came forth radiant. The new Earl of Padiham congratulated Isabel on her approaching marriage, of which he said he had just heard, and regretted that his own could not be celebrated at the same time. And so he rode away, and left Phemy as merry as a bird in the waking of dawn.

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So almost before Isabel was aware—with these events and with preparations for the wedding—her marriage-day was at hand. It seemed to suddenly leap out of the future into the present. Three days before it seemed still very distant; two days before it seemed only one day nearer than it had been the day before; then the gulf seemed to contract and disappear, and lo! they were at the morning of the very day, and Ainsworth was by her side!

George was absent—he had gone for a holiday; but he wrote a manly letter to Isabel, begging her to believe that he stayed away from her wedding because of no feeling of estrangement, but only because he thought that his presence might embarrass the whole party. And with that he wished her and her husband (about to be) "happiness and prosperity." The letter was simple and hon-

est, and strove hard to be rid of all trace of self-pity or wounded vanity.

Suffield had declared a holiday at the works on the wedding-day, and there was a great concourse in the church on that August morning, when the worthy man with tears in his eyes gave his niece away, and anon greeted her as "Mrs. Ainsworth." But the most notable fact in connection with the wedding is that Mrs. Suffield's wedding-present to her niece was that very box, containing Uncle Harry's jewels and trinkets, which Isabel had turned over to her aunt not many weeks before.

And then—and then the married pair drove away into the new life which lay before them—the life of husband and wife, with its new cares and new burdens, its new duties and new responsibilities.



THE END

